

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Lindfield School

Lindfield Road, Hampden Park, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 0BQ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

The Lindfield School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The head of provision of this school is Nick Upton. This school is part of The Southfield Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kirsty Eydmann, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Neal. Kirsty Eydmann is also the executive principal of this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this school. Staff make sure every pupil feels valued within the school community. Pupils sometimes arrive at the school with low levels of confidence and self-esteem. The school's work to support and integrate these pupils into school life is very effective. Parents and carers are often astounded that, by the end of their first term, their children have not only happily settled, but also taken on a leading role in one of the school's regular theatre or musical productions.

The school has high expectations for pupils. All pupils follow a broad and ambitious academic curriculum. The school carefully tracks each pupils' progress against their individual targets, and through the school's curriculum. Any pupils who are underachieving are quickly identified and the school provides effective support. Consequently, pupils achieve very well.

Pupils live up to the school's clear expectations for behaviour. Pupils learn about their rights, and the rights of others. This helps pupils to understand the ways in which they can contribute positively to the school community and to the wider world. Staff effectively support pupils to develop their independence. Pupils take on a range of leadership roles and additional responsibilities within the school with great confidence and enthusiasm.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has reviewed its curriculum since the last inspection to ensure breadth and choice for pupils, particularly at key stage 4. The school ensures that the curriculum is adapted to take account of the needs and aptitudes of each cohort. Staff maintain a keen awareness of what pupils need to learn, as well as the qualifications they will need, to access further education when they leave the school at the end of Year 11.

The school ensures that the curriculum is delivered by teachers with strong subject knowledge. Teachers carefully tailor lessons to take account of each pupil's starting points and gaps in knowledge. The school ensures that teachers understand the targets in each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. Teachers thread these carefully through the planned curriculum. Across the curriculum, for example, pupils' communication and interaction targets are woven skilfully into lessons.

The English curriculum has been adapted to ensure reading sits at the heart of the school's offer. Pupils enjoy reading, and reflecting on, a range of engaging books that have been carefully mapped through the English curriculum. The school identifies all pupils who are at an earlier stage of learning to read. This information is shared with teachers across the curriculum so that they can effectively support pupils in lessons.

Pupils who continue to need support to read fluently and accurately receive ongoing phonics teaching. Staff provide these pupils with regular opportunities to practise reading books that match the sounds they have learned so that they can apply and secure their new knowledge. The school has carefully chosen its decodable books to ensure that they are appropriate for older pupils and align with their interests.

The school's performing arts programme is particularly strong. It makes a key contribution to pupils' personal development, as well as their academic education. Pupils have opportunities to discover and nurture their talents and interests. Expert teaching ensures that these are systematically developed over time. Pupils, staff and parents spoke with enthusiasm and pride about the performances that pupils put on each year. The school is determined that no pupil is left out of these opportunities.

The school provides strong careers advice and support to all pupils. They ensure every pupil in Year 11 has the opportunity to undertake work experience. A comprehensive life skills curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. All pupils who have recently left the school have successfully transitioned onto college or appropriate further training.

While the school works closely with families and external agencies to improve the attendance of pupils, for a small number of pupils this work has not been successful. Some of these pupils have remained severely absent for too long.

School leaders, and those responsible for governance, have a clear understanding of their roles. The consistently make decisions in the best interests of pupils. Staff, including early career teachers, feel very well supported in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The attendance of a small number of pupils has remained too low over time. These pupils do not benefit fully from the strong quality of education that the school provides. The school should further refine their attendance analysis and attendance strategy so that underlying causes of absence are quickly and precisely identified and integrated into the school's approach to supporting attendance.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Lindfield School, to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in December 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142744
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10341800
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Neal
CEO of the trust	Miss Kirsty Eydmann
Headteacher	Miss Kirsty Eydmann (executive principal)
Website	www.thesouthfieldtrust.com
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils have a range of needs including moderate learning difficulties, autism and speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils may also have associated needs which may include social, emotional and mental health needs. In addition, pupils may have sensory or physical difficulties.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. This school is part of The Southfield Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and took that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the executive principal, who is also the CEO of the trust, the head of provision and the school's wider leadership team. The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of trustees.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: communication and interaction, early reading, English and mathematics and the performing arts, art and design and science. For each group of subjects, the inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors met with groups of staff. Inspectors also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors met some parents on day one of the inspection and had regard to the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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