

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

Rushbottom Lane, New Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex SS7 4LW

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Caring staff provide a warm welcome as each pupil arrives at Glenwood. They understand what every pupil needs to help them settle quickly. Calm and orderly starts show that pupils are happy to be at school. Many are beavering away at carefully selected tasks matched to their needs. Others follow established routines to stay safe and prepare them for learning. Through the day, the planned curriculum provides a wealth of experiences that benefit pupils' needs.

Attentive staff pay close attention to pupils in their care. They understand the different ways pupils communicate their needs. Through gentle persuasion they help to sustain pupils' engagement. Adults also take appropriate action where pupils have greater difficulty managing their emotions. These timely and prompt actions mean there is little disruption to learning.

The school is ambitious for pupils. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' communicative and social skills. A bespoke learning journey for every pupil supports achievement of this aim. This prepares them well for life out of school and adulthood.

Pupils enjoy their outdoors activities. Visiting local restaurants or gardening at the 'nature centre' are favourites. These opportunities nurture pupils' interests and develop their talents.

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

The school has a well-considered curriculum designed to meet the needs of pupils. The overarching curriculum is carefully broken down. Staff make effective assessments of pupils' needs to create a highly individualised curriculum. This applies to children in the early years and students in the sixth form. Information contained in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans sets precise targets. They are effectively used alongside input from external professionals and therapists. This collaborative approach means pupils achieve the outcomes in their EHC plans.

Staff draw on the support of team colleagues to check the precision of their learning plans. Sensory experiences promote pupils' engagement and motivation. One-to-one interactions are purposeful and adults are knowledgeable about pupils' needs. Activities allow time for rehearsal and practice to embed key knowledge. Each task seeks to encourage use of interaction to build independence. Adults capture key moments of learning using an online platform. Checks on this information help staff to ensure pupils make secure progress.

Everyone is a 'reader' at Glenwood. Pupils learn to communicate through a range of strategies. At the early stages of communication, they learn to use eye gazing and picture cues. Staff are well trained to recognise pupils' requests and wishes. This means pupils have a voice and take an active role in their learning. When ready, pupils learn to read using phonics. The chosen scheme uses a multi-sensory approach that is effectively tailored to individual needs.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They enjoy their friendships and welcome opportunities to be helpful. Most pupils attend well. The school is vigilant when attendance becomes an issue. In these cases, families receive appropriate support and encouragement to return to school.

From the start, pupils learn how to communicate their needs. This provides a platform for building life skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. Beyond this, pupils take on responsibilities around the school. Pupils learn to share views and listen to the opinions of others serving on the school council. In the sixth form, students take part in enterprise activities or work in the school cafe. They learn how to work as a team while developing confidence and self-esteem. Older pupils receive guidance about careers at an appropriate and bespoke level. They visit places of work and learn ways of participating in the local community.

Since moving into new accommodation, the school has experienced rapid growth in pupil numbers. Increased demand for school places has presented challenging issues. A minority of parents and carers are concerned about the impact this is having on their child's education. The school has not been successful in ensuring that its communication strategies keep these parents well informed.

A strong team spirit supports staff well-being. However, recruitment challenges have placed more demands on their workload. This is being managed with extra staff, but

appointments are recent. Governors are supportive but do not fully check the effectiveness of all the curriculum. This means they do not have a secure understanding of how well leaders implement their curriculum programmes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents remain dissatisfied with the communication they receive from the school. They are not clear about how their child's learning is supported in school and do not understand reasons for decisions made by the school. The school should continue to build on its communication strategies so that more parents have a better understanding of how the provision made for their child supports progress.
- Governors do not sufficiently challenge the school about the curriculum. This means they do not have a deep enough knowledge about the impact of the curriculum and how consistently it is delivered. Governors should ensure that they undertake the training needed to deepen their understanding so that leaders are fully challenged and held to account.

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 to be 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in November 2018.

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 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	115469
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323630
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Westenhofer
Headteacher	Liz Cornish
Website	glenwood.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, global development delay and autism.
- The school has an attached residential provision, The Glen. This provision was not in scope for this inspection.
- The school is experiencing a period of growth, owing to a demand for places at special school provision.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, other teaching staff and learning support assistants. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector focused inspection activity on the following areas of learning: early communication and interaction, early reading and mathematical development, and cognition and learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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. The lead inspector also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils while they were in class or at breaktimes about their experiences of school.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Fowler

Ofsted Inspector

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