

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

Ogilvie House, 114 Holland Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 6HF

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This school does not rest on its laurels. Staff explore every option to give pupils a voice. The sharp focus on helping pupils to communicate means that pupils are learning to read, count and understand the world around them. Parents highly appreciate the level of care and attention their children receive. Pupils happily undertake many everyday activities that previously were problematic for families, such as going to the dentist or brushing their hair.

The high ambitions staff have for pupils mean that no barrier is too high to climb. If a communication aid does not work for a pupil, staff will try another. If a pupil cannot regulate their behaviour, they will provide sessions, such as sensory stimuli and music, to help them be ready for learning. The warm, close relationships between staff and pupils means that staff readily read mood, wants and needs. This enables staff to effectively choose resources and equipment which will help pupils develop.

By the time pupils leave school they have undertaken an array of experiences that help them to function in the wider world. This includes sleeping overnight away from home, completing work experience and attending the school prom.

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

The school's ambitious goal of creating meaning in pupils' lives and preparing them for adulthood is effectively realised. Post-16 students are successful in securing their next steps, including work placements. Pupils' social and emotional development, as well as

the targets on their education, health and care (EHC) plans, are interwoven through the curriculum. The bespoke delivery and the close checking of pupils' learning and engagement enable pupils to flourish.

Learning to communicate is at the heart of the school's work. Most pupils are non-verbal or have limited speech. Staff follow diligently the school's framework to develop pupils' communication. After one half term, Reception children express what they need through signing and the use of symbols. Staff have expert knowledge of how to rephrase their language to be understood. They model carefully key questions and answers, such as how to greet and initiate conversation. Their use of communication aids, inside and outside of the classroom, are making a significant difference to pupils' lives. Parents receive training on how to replicate their use at home and this reinforces pupils' learning. As a result, pupils who cannot speak can communicate via other means. Thus, they show what they know and understand, enjoy their learning and form new friendships.

The school is a reading and language-rich environment. Staff exploit every opportunity to give pupils reading experiences. This may involve sensory stories, accessing the travelling librarian and participating in drama workshops. Those few pupils who are ready to learn to read are well supported in acquiring phonics knowledge. The books they read are matched to the sounds they know.

The consistency with classroom routines enables a calm and productive learning atmosphere. Staff pay close attention to the structure of the day. For example, ensuring short, focused sessions when a pupil may find it difficult to sustain concentration. Typically, pupils manage change well. Transition points are explicit through visual timetables and objects of reference. Pupils are deliberately exposed to a variety of situations, from individual hydrotherapy to group visits to learn in the community. Post-16 students learn how to conduct themselves on local transport, having their own bus passes. Reception children integrate well with older pupils in the playground.

The pastoral care for pupils is second to none. The home-school, therapist and nursing teams work in tandem with families to ensure that the school day runs smoothly. They manage the complex medical requirements of pupils effectively. Staff receive ongoing training to respond to the ever-changing needs of pupils. This helps pupils to attend school. The changes in personal circumstances are not a barrier to the receipt of education.

The wider development of pupils is finely tuned so they gain independence over time. The use of the on-site flat helps pupils learn how to look after themselves, such as cooking, making the bed and tidying up. For post-16 students this includes how to live independently and manage a budget. Children in the early years have water confidence sessions to prepare them to learn to swim. Pupils undertake a plethora of visits to the local community and further afield, so they know how to shop, sit in a theatre or eat in a restaurant. Visits from different organisations, such as the police, also help pupils understand how to get help should they need it. The school's careers strategy is equally as well considered. Pupils have access to careers guidance, careers fairs and undertake work tasters.

Governors have a strong insight into the educational experience of pupils at the school. They look closely at the curriculum offer for individual pupils and utilise school events to garner parental opinion. They check first-hand the difference funding makes to ensure value for money. For instance, they ensure the welfare of staff through investment in well-being packages. Staff appreciate governors' and leaders' regard for this. The staff are a supportive, tight-knit team and morale is high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 third ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in December 2012.

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	115471
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345161
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	160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Linda Robinson
Headteacher	Jennifer Grotier
Website	www.shorefields.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties and physical and neurological impairment. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school has grown in size and is over the number of pupils it can accommodate according to its registration.
- The school provides wide-ranging outreach to other schools. To undertake this work, there is an additional acting headteacher who runs the school with the executive headteacher.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body, other members of the governing body, the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, senior leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector held telephone discussions with some parents.
- Inspectors considered the improvements leaders are undertaking in the school, such as how they are catering for the increased number of pupils.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their experiences of school and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during their social time.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and parents' free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ruth Brock

Ofsted Inspector

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