

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

Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7LW

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 November 2024

## Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Linda Farenden. This is the single member of Knightsfield School academy trust. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Linda Farenden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Mellor.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join this school from Year 5 to access the school's auditory-oral approach for deaf pupils. Prior to their arrival, pupils experience varied levels of success in education. During their time at this school, pupils gain the confidence and communication skills needed to thrive in education and the wider world.

Throughout the school pupils, including students in the sixth form flourish at school and learn the curriculum exceptionally well. They work with immense determination to achieve their very high aspirations. In lessons, pupils ask interesting questions. They delight in thoroughly investigating what they are studying. Pupils are rightly proud of their impressive educational and personal accomplishments. They celebrate the achievements of their peers.

Pupils show great care for others within the school's well-established, positive ethos. With the support of the school's personal development programme, pupils develop excellent social skills. For example, pupils take part in the 'smile' programme to understand empathy and learn how to deal positively with situations that may cause them anxiety. During discussions, pupils listen carefully and show sensitivity towards others' needs.

Positive relationships ensure pupils get along well together and enjoy each other's company. On the rare occasions when friends fall out, they are well-equipped to find positive solutions to their disagreements.

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

The school's ambitious curriculum is well designed so that pupils learn knowledge in a sensible order that builds on what they already know. The school ensures that staff know the exact knowledge that pupils must learn. Staff arrange learning activities that enable pupils to learn the curriculum extremely well. Staff routinely check what pupils know and understand. When pupils appear to have forgotten or misunderstood something, staff provide timely support so that pupils do not fall behind.

Staff ensure that pupils have lots of opportunities to practice the pronunciation of new words. Teachers also review words previously taught so that pupils remember and use them correctly. As a result, pupils articulate themselves incredibly well in speech and writing. Pupils learn to read fluently and understand much of what they read. Teachers provide pupils with carefully chosen books that help pupils develop their reading. The school provides strong support for pupils that find reading difficult so that they become confident, fluent readers.

The school has a precise understanding of the complex special educational needs and/or disabilities that some pupils have. Staff use the school's guidance and training and arrange support that ensures that these pupils learn the curriculum well.

The school has built strong partnerships with local education providers to enhance the school's curriculum. This enables the school to offer subjects not available at the school, such as animal care and mechanics. Staff meticulously keep abreast of pupils' progress. The school's support ensures pupils and students in the sixth form are highly successful in their off-site studies.

The school prepares pupils very well for life after secondary education. They have a strong programme for pupils and students in the sixth form to learn about potential careers. Alongside this, the school ensures pupils learn about and hear from significant deaf figures in society. These contribute towards pupils' high aspirations for the future. The careers provision does not include many opportunities for pupils to experience the workplace. However, the school recognises and is broadening the range of ways that pupils engage in learning about the world of work.

The school's 'ambassador's badge' scheme inspires and supports pupils to develop new talents and interests. Pupils take up a range of enriching pursuits such as music, art, drama, computer coding and sport. Owing to the school's strong personal, social, health and economic education, pupils have opportunities to explore issues young people face. Pupils are helped to develop a mature understanding of how to keep themselves emotionally and physically healthy.

Over the last six months, the school has experienced changes of staff and leaders. Trustees and leaders have steered the school through these changes very well, ensuring that the school continues to develop. Trustees secure the necessary information they need to hold leaders accountable for the quality of the school's provision. Staff morale is very high and parents have confidence in the school's work. Staff value the opportunities

the school provides for their professional development. They also appreciate the way the school supports them to maintain a reasonable workload.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in January 2019.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138485
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323724
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	7
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Helen Mellor
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Linda Farenden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Farenden
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.knightsfield.herts.sch.uk">www.knightsfield.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is the single member of Knightsfield School academy trust.
- The interim headteacher took up her post in September 2024. Trustees have recruitment plans in place to secure a substantive headteacher.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The school provides education for deaf pupils. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- 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.

## 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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 held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, trustees, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents and other information about the behaviour and attitudes and the personal development of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Abeyasekera

Ofsted Inspector

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