

Inspection of an outstanding school: Springwater School

High Street, Starbeck, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 7LW

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

Springwater School continues to be an outstanding school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Staff know all pupils' names and pupils respond with smiles and waves. They know that staff care and support them. Staff are skilled at helping pupils to explain and understand their emotions. This helps pupils to begin to calm themselves when necessary. Staff make sure that pupils can communicate in a way that they can be understood. Pupils like school and have lots of friends.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. However, pupils do not achieve as rapidly as they could. This is because the curriculum is not yet well planned in all subjects. At times, pupils are not taught information at the right time or in the right order. Some pupils tackle worksheets that are too complex. This makes learning hard. Despite this, pupils enjoy their lessons. They particularly like practical activities, such as making pizza and swimming.

Parents and carers are really pleased with the school. Their children are happy and are getting on well. One parent echoed the feelings of others, saying: 'I cannot praise highly enough the way that Springwater supports, not only my child but myself as well, to help her cope with the challenges she faces every day.'

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

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils in the school has increased by a third. Leaders have reshaped the curriculum into pathways. This is helping to better meet the needs of pupils. What is being taught to pupils and when are under review.

Leaders and governors have a clear action plan for curriculum developments. They have focused on improvements in English. Pupils' reading and their knowledge of letters and sounds are improving. However, in other subjects, leaders and teachers struggle to

explain what they are teaching and why. Pupils do not always learn the most essential knowledge and in the right order.

Teachers check on how well pupils are learning in the classrooms. They use questioning effectively to tease out pupils' knowledge and understanding. They identify gaps in learning and challenge pupils' misconceptions. However, assessment systems are currently under review by leaders. There is not a clear picture of pupils' progress across the curriculum.

In the early years, children make a good start to their education. They learn to communicate well. Children settle into school routines quickly and use signs and symbols to make themselves understood.

Sixth-form students enjoy being in school. Relationships between staff and students are strong and behaviour is good. Students access many real-life experiences, such as travel training, budgeting, cooking and shopping.

Since the previous inspection, the number of staff has increased. Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and respected by leaders. Leaders make sure that staff have ongoing training. This helps adults to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Staff support and manage pupils' emotional, behavioural and medical needs well.

The work of some new middle leaders varies in quality. The effectiveness of their contributions to curriculum improvements is still developing. This means that not all areas of the curriculum are well planned and sequenced.

Staff encourage pupils to be independent. They support pupils to communicate effectively. Pupils use many communication tools, including signing. They move around school with little support. Pupils work independently on mathematics and English during bay work sessions. Pupils have lots of outdoor experiences. They enjoy the forest school and the new multisensory outdoor playground area. With support, pupils understand and manage their emotions and anger. Some pupils can ask for time out to help them to calm down.

The school offers lots of opportunities for pupils' personal development. They learn about internet safety, healthy eating, elections and relationships. Pupils are well prepared for life after Springwater.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable in this area. Staff speak confidently about policies and procedures relating to keeping children safe. They are aware of the difficulties which may affect pupils with complex needs. Adults are vigilant, for example, to any changes in appearance or attitude.

The member of staff with responsibility for safeguarding is diligent. Leaders make sure that pupils get the help and support they need in a timely fashion.

Leaders carry out thorough checks on adults working with pupils in the school. This reduces the risks for staff and pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including governors, have a clear action plan for the development of the curriculum. This action plan started in September 2019 with English. In English, particularly within the primary phase, leaders are clear about what they want pupils to learn, building on the knowledge pupils already have. However, the action plan is in its infancy. Other curriculum subjects are not as developed as English. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans for all subjects and across all pathways are coherent and well sequenced.
- Middle leadership is of variable quality. Greater consistency is needed. Senior leaders should equip middle leaders with the knowledge and confidence needed to improve their area of the curriculum.
- Leaders are in the process of reviewing and amending the school's assessment systems. Leaders do not have a consistent picture of how well pupils are learning in all subjects. Leaders have not ensured that the most able pupils on the semi-formal pathway are fully assessed so that they are building on prior knowledge and rapidly developing skills. In subjects such as personal health, social and citizenship education, pupils' progress is not discretely monitored and assessed. Leaders need to ensure that, under the revised assessment system, teachers are held to account for the teaching and learning that are taking place in the classroom.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding on 1 July 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 121776 |
| Local authority | North Yorkshire |
| Inspection number | 10110863 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 83 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 39 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mr Sean Pond |
| Headteacher | Mrs Sarah Edwards |
| Website | www.springwater.n-yorks.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 1–2 July 2015 |

Information about this school

- Springwater School is a community special school that caters for pupils between the ages of two and 19. The school has provision for two-year-old children. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no children of this age on the school roll.
- Pupils have profound and multiple or severe learning or physical difficulties. Most current pupils have co-existing or multiple needs. Pupils with autism spectrum disorder and elements of challenging behaviour also attend the school.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased from 53 to 83.
- The school runs a series of lunchtime clubs for pupils to choose, as well as one after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, class teachers and support staff. We spoke with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- We spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. We considered the 21 responses to the staff survey.
- We considered the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 14 free-text responses. We spoke with a parent by telephone and considered an email which was sent to inspectors.
- We met with those staff responsible for safeguarding in the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including policies and procedures, records of behaviour and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school. We spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of them.
- As part of this inspection, we considered how leaders plan and organise the English, mathematics, reading and personal and social education curriculums. We spoke to teachers and subject leaders. We visited lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books, as well as other evidence of their learning.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Nolan

Ofsted Inspector

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