

Inspection of a good school: Furrowfield School

Whitehill Drive, Felling, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE10 9RZ

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2022

Outcome

Furrowfield School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

After a period of significant change, leaders have taken effective action to ensure that pupils benefit from a good quality of education. Leaders and a re-energised staff team are working together to ensure that pupils can succeed. Ambition is high for all pupils.

Leaders have improved the school's curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. They have made sure that the curriculum is broad but still responsive to pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Staff help pupils to work towards their individual targets. Pupils benefit from effective learning that prepares them for their next steps in education and future life. Leaders make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy. They receive effective support to help them to develop healthy lifestyles and to maintain positive mental health.

Relationships between staff and pupils are secure. Most pupils are happy at school. They feel supported and cared for by staff. Most pupils behave well. They engage with lessons well. Pupils say bullying is not an issue. They know that staff would support them if it was.

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

Leaders' expectations are high. They have redeveloped the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious. The curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills, while addressing their SEMH needs. In most subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and when. Teachers generally use assessment well to check what pupils know. However, in some subjects, leaders have not mapped key knowledge out as clearly as in others. This makes it difficult for teachers to check what pupils know in these subjects. Leaders are mindful of this and are working with staff to further improve provision.

Staff support pupils' reading in focused reading lessons. Pupils access a range of books that meet their different interests. Pupils have the opportunity to read each day. Most

pupils engage with reading well. They regularly read in front of others and can describe what they have read with clarity. Those pupils that need extra support are taught phonics well. Leaders are further developing support for pupils who struggle to read. Staff receive ongoing training in reading and phonics. Leaders have developed a culture of reading in the school.

Around school, most pupils behave well. This includes at the start and at the end of the day. Pupils that need help to manage their behaviour are supported effectively by staff. Staff intervene swiftly to calm down individual incidents of poor behaviour. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. Leaders review all behaviour incidents. These reviews are used to inform pupils' support plans. The school is orderly and pupils develop good habits for learning.

Alternative provision is used thoughtfully to engage a small number of pupils. This enables some pupils to access a vocational curriculum. A forest school is also used to develop pupils' resilience and social skills. Pupils learn how to take turns and work with others positively. This enables pupils to access the school's curriculum more effectively. Staff support pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They have opportunities to talk to people with opposing viewpoints in constructive ways. Leaders ensure pupils can receive support to help them cope with difficult experiences from the past.

Leaders are present around school and supportive of the staff team. They work well with the new governing body. Governors are experienced and work with leaders to ensure that improvements are ongoing. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors have rapidly developed systems to hold school leaders to account for the performance of the school. Most staff feel their workload is positively managed and their well-being is thoughtfully considered by leaders. Early career teachers receive effective development and regular mentoring. Staff appreciate leaders' accessibility.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding procedures are efficient. Leaders have clear responsibilities. Procedures to check the suitability of adults prior to their employment are robust. Staff are effectively trained to spot when pupils need support. They receive regular training to refresh learning and update their safeguarding knowledge. This includes weekly safeguarding briefings.

Pupils' safeguarding records are detailed. Pupils who need support receive it in a timely manner. Safeguarding leaders work effectively with external agencies to meet children's needs.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well supported by adults in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not mapped out the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn consistently well across all subjects. This makes it difficult for teachers to check what pupils know and can do. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculum so that teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils need to learn in all subjects. They should then support teachers to better use assessment to check what pupils have learned.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 school to be good in April 2013.

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](#)' 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

Unique reference number	108426
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10211370
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Marshall
Headteacher	Heather Scott
Website	http://www.furrowfieldschool.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Furrowfield School is a special school for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes provision for pupils with SEMH needs.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- There have been significant school leadership and staffing changes since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the school's governing body and a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The provision for teaching English was also scrutinised.
- The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The inspector reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's records of checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school, including activities at breaks and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- An inspector observed activities at the start and end of the day.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about their workload and pupils' behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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