

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

Haywards Heath Road, North Chailey, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 4EF

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this life-changing school. Pupils who attend here have significant and complex learning and medical needs. Some pupils have life-limiting and degenerative conditions. Despite these challenges, the school maintains the highest ambition for what all pupils will achieve. Therefore, every day, pupils take part in a wide range of ambitious and valuable experiences. This is supported by the use of bespoke technology and devices provided to pupils, designed by specialist on-site engineers. By using these, pupils develop agency as they are given control and capacity to take part in a range of activities.

Pupils are happy and motivated learners. They are independent communicators who know that their views and choices will be listened to by the adults who help them. They are given opportunities to develop vital communication skills in a range of on-site settings. This includes working together to look after the animals on the 'Patchwork Farm' and playing computer games using their bespoke devices. Pupils are known and cared for deeply. The relationships they have with staff are very strong. Adults here know exactly what will work best for each pupil. This is because staff take the time to understand the needs and wishes of the pupils they support.

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

Every pupil, from primary to post-16, benefits from the highly ambitious and bespoke 'Chailey Heritage Individual Learner Driven' (CHILD) curriculum. In-depth and specialist checks on pupils' needs are made when they arrive at the school. Information from these checks is used to create detailed profiles in a range of important areas. These areas are

personalised depending on the developmental stage of each pupil. All pupils have profiles for communication, engagement, physical, access technology and social and emotional well-being. Some pupils have additional profiles, including driving, mobility and functional skills. For a small number of pupils, more specific learning profiles are appropriate. Pupils with these profiles gain foundational knowledge through early mathematics and English activities. This includes a well-considered phonics programme for the very small number of pupils who are ready to learn to read. Pupils achieve exceptionally well because of this precise and ambitious approach.

Staff are experts in what they do. They have superb knowledge about profound and multiple learning difficulties. This means that support for pupils across the school is exemplary. The school implements a range of communication systems for pupils. These are also personalised to what works best for each pupil. For some pupils, this may be the use of positive and negative responses through eye pointing or vocal cues. For other pupils this is the use of eye gaze technology or voice output communication aids. Whatever the system, all staff know how each pupil communicates very well.

Pupils' regulation and positive engagement in school are excellent. Pupils do not become frustrated, because they are able to communicate their choices. The use of the 'Chailey communication system' provides pupils with the resources to share when they have a problem or concern. The entire school is designed to provide the optimum sensory environment for pupils. As a result, learning environments are calm and positive. On the rare occasion that a pupil is dysregulated, staff skilfully and effectively help them.

The personal development provision is exemplary. Pupils learn about and actively celebrate various religious and cultural traditions. Through the well-designed CHILD curriculum, pupils also learn about themselves and their place in the world. They are taught to share their views and recognise that others also have opinions. Pupils learn that what they have to say is important and will be responded to. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage. Future planning meetings with parents begin in Year 9 and continue through to the post-16 stage, where clear pathways are set for all students. In the post-16 provision, students take part in a range of effective activities which support them to be ready for what comes next. This includes being ready for the physical, communication and emotional demands of their next environment.

Pupils' physical development is prioritised. The use of specialist therapies, including hippotherapy, rebound therapy and hydrotherapy, target pupils' individual physical needs. Consequently, pupils build capacity in a range of movements which help them to become more independent.

Staff are motivated and passionate about the work that they do. They appreciate the high levels of training and guidance they receive to fulfil their role. The quality of leadership in the school is excellent. School leaders, as well as governors, trustees and the foundation's executive team are extremely knowledgeable. Beyond this, they are driven by the same moral purpose to make sure that these pupils receive the best possible experiences that they can.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in October 2014.

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	114682
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10341349
Type of school	All-through
School category	Non-maintained special school
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	75
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Creamer
CEO of the trust	Gareth Germer
Headteacher	Richard Green
Website	www.chf.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Chailey Heritage School is part of the Chailey Heritage Foundation, which is a registered charity.
- Chailey Heritage School caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The inspectors inspected only the education provision at this school.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and chair of the board of trustees. They also met with the CEO of the charity.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from one of the placing local authorities.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at evidence of pupils' learning.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also communicated with pupils, supported by staff.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' meetings.
- The inspectors considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Petch

His Majesty's Inspector

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