

Inspection of Wolverdene Special School

22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2AF

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are settling back into school life after the challenges of the pandemic and changes in leadership. However, no two days are the same at this school because of the unique characteristics of the pupils it serves. Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe in the care of the dedicated staff.

Pupils attend this school because their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) mean that they find it hard to manage their behaviour. Pupils are responding well to a change of approach in helping them to behave well. The move away from sanctions and reprimands to repair and therapy is proving successful.

Most pupils enjoy learning and playing together. They sometimes fall out, and are beginning to understand the difference between disagreements and bullying. Pupils know that if they are worried about anything, adults will help straightaway.

Leaders and teachers want pupils to have a wide and varied understanding of the world and to be prepared for the next steps in their education. Adults help pupils to understand world events in an appropriate way and encourage them to take on responsibilities around the school. One parent told inspectors that, 'Wolverdene is a lifeline not just to my son but us as a family.'

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

Governors described to inspectors how they had led the school through a 'perfect storm'. They have admirably managed the challenges caused by the pandemic, changes in leadership, staffing and the closure of the satellite provision. This has meant that the school's overall effectiveness has declined; however, the school is getting back on track and improving. Governors, with the new headteacher, have set a new direction and are putting plans into action. Current staff are fully supportive of this and are working hard together to improve pupils' behaviour and learning.

The headteacher has led the reorganisation of the school so that pupils are grouped in classes determined by their needs rather than their age. This is helping the curriculum to be planned and taught more effectively. The change in approach to managing behaviour is working well. Although still needed, and used appropriately, the use of exclusion and restrictive physical intervention is reducing. Pupils now routinely choose to use the safe spaces in the school to calm down. Adult supervision, de-escalation and, where needed, intervention to manage behaviour are highly effective.

Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils they work with very well. These adults manage the needs and anxieties of each individual effectively and take every opportunity to promote learning when pupils are ready. For example, teachers use assessment to know really clearly the next steps to teach pupils in mathematics. The curriculum here focuses rightly on number and how it can be applied to measure

things in real-life situations, although pupils also enjoy learning about shapes and recalling their properties.

Reading is prioritised. All around the school, pupils can be seen with adults taking the opportunity to read together in quiet, comfortable spaces. A love of reading is being generated and shared. Those pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read have books and materials that match the sounds they are learning. However, despite their dedication and enthusiasm, some newer staff need more training to teach phonics using the school's agreed programme accurately.

The curriculum includes a wide range of interesting topics that bring together different subjects. Some of these topics, such as 'pole to pole', really build on the enthusiasm and knowledge of the most able pupils well. In most classes, pupils are given interesting things to do, but they are not always clear about how the underlying knowledge builds on what they have learned before. This is because staff have not had subject-specific training to help them know the specific knowledge pupils need to know in different subjects, in the right order. Therefore, pupils remember interesting activities, such as experiments to see what happens when sandwiches go mouldy, but not the knowledge that sits behind these, such as learning about microbes and bacteria.

Pupils are open to taking on responsibilities such as helping in the library or giving their views on the school council. They regularly help organise charity events and think about helping others who are less fortunate. Learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE) prepares pupils well to be safe in their communities and in relationships, and in readiness for the next stage of their education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are very aware of the additional vulnerabilities related to safeguarding the pupils who attend this school. Any need for help or support is quickly identified. The work with other agencies in the local area to protect pupils is extensive and effective. Leaders regularly review their work with individual pupils to ensure that everything possible is being done to keep them safe in and out of school. However, more could be done to check on the very few pupils on roll who are not currently attending school or who attend alternative provision.

Governors are meticulous in their oversight of safeguarding, especially around the management of recruitment and the investigation of complaints and concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects other than English and mathematics, some staff do not have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the precise next steps needed to help pupils make

progress. As a result, pupils sometimes remember experiences rather than essential knowledge and skills. Leaders should ensure that staff have training to give them confidence in teaching subject-specific content.

- Some newer staff have not been trained in the school's chosen phonics programme. Therefore, their teaching or sound pronunciation is not as accurate as it could be, and this hinders pupils' progress when they are at an early stage of learning to read. Leaders need to organise up-to-date phonics training for newer staff.

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.

If you are the school and 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

Unique reference number	116635
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200358
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	6 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Bell
Headteacher	Nathalie Akhmatova
Website	www.wolverdene.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils also have autism spectrum disorder or other needs. All of the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There is weekly boarding available for up to 10 pupils, which was inspected separately in January 2022.
- A satellite class at a nearby mainstream school was closed during the pandemic, with the pupils and staff permanently returning to the main school site.
- The headteacher was appointed and took up post in April 2021, following a period of interim leadership.
- The school uses one alternative provider that has a childcare registration with Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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, deputy headteacher, head of care and head of pupil support.
- The lead inspector met separately with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. He also held a video call with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors talked to pupils, staff, leaders and governors. They looked at the school's documentation, including records relating to recruitment, behaviour, restrictive physical intervention, referrals and work with other agencies, complaints and alternative provision. Inspectors observed the school and leaders at work and the processes followed to help keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered responses to the confidential questionnaires for staff and pupils and Parent View for parents and carers.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Shazia Akram

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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