

Inspection of Lexden Springs School

Winstree Road, Colchester CO3 0PZ

Inspection dates: 3–4 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told us they feel happy, safe and enjoy coming to this very friendly, welcoming school. We found that the children's welfare and well-being are at the heart of everything the school does.

Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other because classrooms are purposeful and calm. They are polite and respectful to each other and their teachers. Pupils who find it hard to manage their feelings get effective and considerate support. Pupils say that day-to-day routines are straightforward to understand. Ample staff are available at lunchtimes and breaktimes to help pupils eat their food and play cheerfully together. Pupils, parents and carers agree that there is no bullying. Pupils said that staff would help them immediately if they had any concerns. Pupils' physical and learning needs are met. Pupils' needs do not become barriers to them enjoying their learning.

Teachers make sure that they know the exact needs of children when they start school. The curriculum is based securely on the needs of the pupil. Pupils rise to teachers' challenge to do the best they can to succeed. Teachers prepare students well for life after school when they leave the sixth form.

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

Leaders have given much thought to what they want each pupil to learn as they progress through Lexden Springs School. The tailored curriculum inspires pupils' interest in learning. It also helps to develop important life skills and independence. Each pupil is supported to grow in confidence, and be able to take part in the wider community. The well-trained teachers and co-educators work well together to provide safe and inspiring environments. They know each pupil as an individual. They understand pupils' specific educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Morning routines encourage pupils to communicate and interact with staff and each other. Pupils who are unable to talk use a range of resources to enable them to communicate. Teachers help pupils to communicate in a range of scenarios and places. For example, we saw pupils use communication books to make choices. We saw others using pictures to choose snacks at breaktime. Other pupils expressed communication through eye pointing or grasping.

Pupils in the sensory room enjoyed a story being told to them using lights and bubbles to engage them. Pupils are excited listeners as staff read to them or get them to express through communication what the story is telling. For example, a group of pupils were happily telling a story through the use of soft toys. The fluent readers read with expression and are able to predict the ending.

Teachers of all subjects have a deep understanding of pupils' needs. Pupils are provided with opportunities for creative development, exploration, discovery, understanding the community and physical and self-development. Through

appealing topics, pupils develop communication and social skills. Teachers give thought to the order in which they teach these concepts. Skilful teaching helps pupils to remember the most important information they have learned. Teachers plan work that builds on what pupils know and can do. Leaders plan sequenced steps of learning in most subjects. Yet, some subjects are not as precise in terms of planning or sequencing.

Leaders have made sure that the systems to check on pupils' development match their needs. The system tracks development according to their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Even though teachers use these assessments, they could be used more carefully to plan work. This would encourage pupils to learn and develop further.

Holistic care is exclusively provided by the school's own sensory occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, and social nurse on site. The hydrotherapy swimming pool provides sheer enjoyment for pupils. It allows them to stretch and work their muscles. The adventure playground is relished by pupils who burn off energy using the wonderful facilities.

Staff make sure that children are happy and safe in the early years. Children get off to a rapid start because teachers get to know pupils swiftly. Teachers provide an exciting curriculum. This helps children to discover with confidence the world around them. Teachers encourage children to explore and be as independent as possible. Children particularly enjoy the imaginative outdoor opportunities.

Leaders have high expectations of sixth-form students. The curriculum meets students' needs very well. There are opportunities for students to access a range of work experiences. Students receive high-quality, personalised careers education advice from professionals. They are well supported by staff to make sensible choices when moving on to further education or adult-supported services.

Pupils can focus on their work because behaviour is managed skilfully. Pupils show respect to their friends, teachers and visitors. Members of staff use the same approach so that pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils that need to self-regulate are always accompanied by an adult. No pupils were seen out of lessons on their own.

The headteacher is well regarded by pupils, staff and parents. Leaders work with parents and carers to develop effective partnerships. Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently. They hold the headteacher to account for the quality of education and the well-being of pupils and staff in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is the top priority for the school. The school's record of the checks they carry out on adults who work in the school is comprehensive. Governors and

leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. They know how to help pupils and how to keep them safe. The designated leaders for safeguarding act promptly to keep pupils safe. They work with a range of external agencies to get pupils the help and support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects are well organised. Curriculum leaders and their teams need to become more adept in making certain that the curriculum in their areas of responsibility are clear and logically sequenced. This is to ensure that there is a coherent approach to the teaching of all components across the key stages.
- Leaders need to continue to develop the assessment system. It is well developed and used in the area of social communication. It now needs to be refined for the other curriculum areas. This will help teachers to plan work even more carefully to match pupils' needs, aptitudes and abilities.

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're 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	115475
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10099537
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	168
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shirley Croft
Headteacher	Simon Wall
Website	www.lexdensprings.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2019

Information about this school

- This is a community special school.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with special educational needs, specifically severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school moved to a new building in September 2019. Leaders were aware of the possible impact this could have on pupils who require familiar surroundings and routines. Leaders implemented a carefully planned transition programme.
- The school does not send pupils to alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the people responsible for safeguarding in the school. We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including case files and the pre-recruitment checks that leaders make on staff. We spoke with staff and pupils and considered the survey responses from staff and parents around safeguarding.
- We spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector met with the school's effectiveness partner.
- We considered the 56 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 55 free-text responses.
- We considered the 77 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school. We spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of them.
- Communication and social interaction, exploration and discovery, me and my community, creative development, and physical and self-help were focused on in depth. We spoke to teachers and curriculum leaders. We visited lessons, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the evidence of their learning.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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