

Inspection of a good school: Paces School for Conductive Education

Thorncliffe Hall, Newton Chambers Road, Chapeltown, Sheffield S35 2PH

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 June 2024

Outcome

Paces School for Conductive Education continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's inclusive approach ensures there are no barriers to pupils' achievements. Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are understood and met well by dedicated, highly skilled staff. Staff know pupils well. They guide and support pupils, empowering them to communicate their needs and feelings. Pupils are safe and trust that adults will take care of them. Pupils are polite and respectful. They respond positively to familiar adults and to visitors to the school.

The school has recently moved to a new building. The environment has been refurbished and is welcoming. Leaders have established an ambitious vision for pupils to be prepared for adulthood and to become independent. The physical learning environment enables pupils to engage well in learning. Adults provide highly tailored provision to meet pupils' individual physical, emotional and medical needs. Adults have an expert understanding of how to develop and support the earliest stages of pupils' communication and interaction with others. The school ensures that all pupils, including those in the early years and sixth form, access a broad and relevant curriculum.

The school's enrichment activities help pupils to develop confidence and independence. Pupils enjoy a range of activities, including rock climbing, drama and choir.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that their children are happy and thriving. Parents appreciate the support that staff provide, both in and out of school. One parent said, 'Paces is an amazing place, they are not just a school but foster a whole community with the pupils, parents and staff.'

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

The school's ambitious curriculum is coherently planned from the early years to post-16. The school's chosen approach of conductive education carefully balances physical development and communication with academic learning. The communication curriculum ensures pupils access the wider curriculum. Pupils frequently practise communication skills

throughout the curriculum. For many pupils, communication tools enhance learning. Since the last inspection, leaders have developed a subject-specific curriculum that meets pupils' individual needs. The school has identified the most important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in all subjects. Teachers check how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. However, subject leaders have not had the opportunity to check the delivery and impact of their subjects.

Pupils recognise that supporting their physical development encourages them to be more independent. They make progress from being heavily supported to greater independence. Pupils see the difference it makes to their lives. They talk knowledgeably about the progress that they make with mobility and life skills.

Pupils enjoy reading. All pupils, including those with the most complex needs, enjoy the stories staff share with them. The reading curriculum ensures that older pupils receive the support that they need to become fluent readers. The school has recently introduced a new phonics programme. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading learn to read accurately using the sounds that they know. Pupils read books matched to their ability. Leaders make detailed checks to establish pupils' starting points in the phonics programme. These checks ensure that phonics lessons address any gaps in learning. Staff have received suitable training in the phonics programme. However, there are some inconsistencies in the way the programme is delivered across the school.

Pupils, including those in the early years and sixth form, have very positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to learn and concentrate in lessons. There are strong routines in place. Learning activities are fun and engaging. Pupils benefit from a language-rich environment. Teachers use familiar songs and rhymes expertly to engage pupils who are at the early stages of learning how to communicate. There are many opportunities for repetition.

Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary. They listen carefully to adults. They know how to be a good friend and know it is important to treat everyone with respect. One pupil said, 'It's important to be loyal to your friend, trust them, respect them and have a sense of humour.' Pupils are motivated by the rewards that they receive, including dojo points, star of the week and the headteacher's award.

There are a wealth of activities on offer to support pupils' wider development, including clubs, educational visits, theme days and weeks, charity events and sporting events. Pupils gain valuable experience of life in the community through visits to local shops and by planning school events. For example, pupils are currently planning the annual music festival, which includes organising advertising, food, guest bands and decorations. Pupils enjoy being part of the school council. These activities help pupils to put into practice the communication and social skills that they learn across the curriculum. This offer is exceptionally well thought out to ensure that there are no barriers to the activities pupils take part in. Staff go the extra mile to make sure these experiences happen. This inclusive approach ensures all pupils receive the same opportunities.

The school has carefully planned the preparation for adulthood offer. This ensures that pupils experience the world around them. The school provides pupils, including sixth-form

students, with appropriate careers information and guidance. The newly developed careers programme links careers to different areas of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to explore their interests when thinking about their next steps.

The school is very aware of the main pressures on staff. They recognise that staff are the school's most valuable resource. Staff are positive about the way leaders, including governors, support them professionally and personally. Staff appreciate the range of activities provided by the well-being team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The recently introduced phonics scheme is in the early stages of implementation. This means there are some inconsistencies in the way that the programme is being taught. The school should continue to embed the programme, ensuring that expectations are clear to staff and that they have the training and support that they need to teach phonics and reading consistently well.
- Subject leaders have not had the chance to check the impact of their curriculum area. This means that they are not clear about how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum over time. The school should ensure that subject leaders have the time to check how well the curriculum is being implemented and to identify any further development or training needed.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2019.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	135815
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10323019
Type of school	All-through
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tom Lane
Headteacher	Ruth Liu
Website	www.paces-school.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides specialist education for pupils with physical disabilities, moderate learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, communication and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including history and personal, social and health education.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their views of the school, their learning, behaviour and safety.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and pupils. They also considered the views of parents and carers using Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also talked to parents in the school playground.

Inspection team

Nicola Beaumont, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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