

# Inspection of a good school: Alfreton Park Community Special School

Alfreton Park, Wingfield Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 7AL

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

## **Outcome**

Alfreton Park Community Special School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are eager to attend this much-loved school. Staff are very caring and supportive. Parents and carers appreciate the help staff give them and their children. One parent reflected the views of others when they stated, 'This is an amazing school, so full of love, passion, care and dedication from the whole staff team.' Pupils say that they feel safe and are happy at the school.

Leaders are passionate about preparing pupils for their next steps. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Staff and parents describe a family atmosphere in the school. Pupils and staff enjoy completing activities together. Staff know the pupils well. They ensure that they understand and meet the pupils' complex needs.

Staff support pupils to communicate their needs in a variety of ways. They understand that some pupils may exhibit a range of behaviours associated with their additional needs. Staff respond well to occasions when pupils behave in ways that are not typical for them. Staff know the causes of distress for each pupil so they can intervene early to help pupils remain calm. Pupils are certain that if bullying were to happen, staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and recently implemented four curriculum pathways. They have designed these to meet pupils' particular needs. The more 'informal pathways' provide excellent learning opportunities for pupils. This high-quality provision starts in the early years and continues through to the sixth form. The sensory needs of pupils are provided for incredibly well.

Pupils develop well from their starting points. They make strong progress in their physical development. Skilled staff and well-structured therapy programmes ensure that all pupils are developing their movement skills. The work to develop the attention of pupils with autism spectrum disorder is exceptional. Staff are skilled at helping pupils improve their

language and communication. Pupils use individual strategies effectively to communicate what they need to others.

Leaders want all pupils to thrive at the school. They have prioritised the emotional needs and mental health of the pupils. The much-loved therapy dog, Hugo, and the guinea pigs all help pupils manage their emotions. Staff use Hugo's presence well to encourage the pupils' physical development as they follow him down corridors or take him for a walk outside.

The formal learning pathway requires some more development. In some of the subjects on this pathway, leaders do not always identify precisely enough the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. This can limit how well pupils develop their understanding in this small number of subjects over time. For example, in mathematics, pupils begin to learn such skills as how to use money before they have fully developed the necessary basic knowledge of number.

Staff use a variety of ways to introduce pupils to books and stories. Some pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read receive support through phonics-based sessions. Not all staff who support pupils in their reading or who teach phonics apply a consistent, systematic approach. As a result, some pupils struggle with accuracy when reading. Staff use reading records well to track the progress of those pupils who are able to read.

Some older pupils and students in the sixth form are working towards accreditation in English and mathematics. Students also enjoy an excellent range of work-related learning. They have opportunities to engage with the local community and undertake extensive work experience with local employers.

Pupils benefit from high-quality personal development. They enjoy activities such as residential trips, visits to shops and learning in the school's outdoor allotment area. Many pupils are involved in enterprise projects based around what they grow on the allotment. Pupils enjoy the tasks staff give them. They value the independence and sense of responsibility undertaking such tasks provides. Pupils were joyous as they each carried out their roles in the Cherry Café.

In the social skills room, pupils learn how to look after themselves and perform household tasks. All these activities prepare them for the world of work and adult life. Pupils are taught about other cultures, religions and moral issues. They receive good-quality careers advice and guidance. The pupils involved in the school council explained passionately how important it was for every pupil to have a say in how the school is run. They showed examples of how they have ensured that they gather the views of the school's non-verbal pupils.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support the school leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of their workload. Staff also value the personal development opportunities they receive.

Leaders have recently focused on ensuring that the new school building provides for pupils' needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this task more difficult. This focus has

meant that leaders have not ensured that up-to-date policies underpin all practice in the school. Leaders are committed to making further improvements to the school.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that 'formal' subjects that need more development and the implementation of the phonics scheme may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. A large group of experienced and qualified staff are knowledgeable about pupils' particular vulnerabilities and behaviours that might put them at increased risk. There are very close links between the safeguarding team and the pupils' families. Staff receive high-quality training in safeguarding and regular updates. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concern. Concerns are recorded in a timely manner and tenaciously followed up with the appropriate agencies when needed. Leaders have appropriate procedures in place to manage any allegations. Staff work with pupils to help them understand online risks.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn, and when, in a few subjects in the formal learning pathway. This limits opportunities for some pupils to develop their understanding securely. Leaders need to ensure that teachers know what they should teach and when in each subject so that pupils fully develop their understanding sequentially over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading in the formal pathway. Not all staff have the knowledge that they need to teach pupils on this pathway to learn to read. As a result, some pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read do not become confident readers as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach pupils to learn to read effectively.

## 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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 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.

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113040
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10208933
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	113
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	John Glasby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Josie O'Donnell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.alfretonpark.derbyshire.sch.uk">www.alfretonpark.derbyshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Alfreton Park Community School is a special school for pupils aged two to 19 who have complex needs, including severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, visual impairment, multi-sensory impairment and multiple and profound learning difficulties.
- Pupils study one of four pathways, dependent on their needs. These are the 'pre-formal', 'informal', 'semi-formal' and 'formal' pathways.
- The school has increased in size since the previous inspection in 2016.
- The new school building on the same site opened on 7 March 2022.
- The current headteacher took up her post in March 2022, having been the acting headteacher from September 2021.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## 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 carried out deep dives in reading and communication, mathematics and physical and sensory provision. 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 looked at individual pupils' education, health and care plans and checked these against the school's provision.
- Inspectors spoke to the leader of the early years provision and visited the early years foundation stage area.
- Inspectors spoke to the leaders of the sixth form and visited the sixth form area and the outdoor learning area.
- Inspectors heard pupils in different year groups read books.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to gather their views.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding team. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.

## Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clive Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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