

Inspection of a school judged Outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Grove Special School

Grove Gardens, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2EN

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

The Grove Special School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Grove School receive the highest quality care and education. Every possible avenue is explored to ensure that pupils' physical, emotional or developmental needs are met in full. Whatever their needs, staff work effectively to enable pupils to succeed. The school's high expectations help pupils to achieve the very best outcomes.

Staff create a safe and secure environment for pupils to learn. Warm, trusting relationships between staff and pupils are part of this success. In lessons, pupils engage well with their learning. Those who are able to sustain concentration on their tasks and engage well with their learning, producing high-quality work. Staff listen to pupils, supporting them to communicate their wishes and feelings. They manage pupils' behaviour with refined expertise.

Pupils' personal development, including the skills needed for adulthood, is woven through everything the school does. Pupils learn how to become more independent and how to keep themselves safe. This starts in the early years and continues through to the sixth form. Pupils benefit greatly from the many well-designed opportunities for community experience. They enjoy a plethora of opportunities to visit places of interest and participate in outdoor activities. This not only gives them new skills but also supports their physical and mental health.

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

This is a school where excellence is built into all that it does. From promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being and helping them manage their own behaviour to

delivering a carefully designed curriculum, everything is centred on preparation for adulthood.

School leaders have accurately evaluated and further improved the curriculum to reflect pupils' needs. The exceptional success of the curriculum is down to the way staff consistently and proactively help pupils to learn. The school ensures that staff access relevant professional development. This means staff know the most effective ways to support pupils. They skilfully adapt lessons around pupils' multiple needs.

The school's effective actions to improve how reading is delivered have had a marked, positive impact on pupils' reading knowledge and skills. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to. They share their love of stories and learning through books about the world around them.

Pupils are highly motivated to succeed and enjoy celebrating their achievements. Staff know pupils well. They modify and tailor the curriculum skilfully so that the work is at the right level. Pupils' education, health and care plans are rigorously reviewed and, when needed, updated to ensure that they are clear and accurately reflect pupils' needs. Teaching encourages pupils to follow their interests and develop their talents. As a result, pupils can achieve accredited awards in a range of academic, vocational and practical subjects.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and at social times. This is because of the school's extremely effective routines. Some pupils require a highly considered approach to support them in developing their social skills. Highly effective support helps them to self-regulate and gain independence. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school.

Leaders rightly maintain a focus on attendance as a priority. They consider carefully the individual approaches which will best support pupils to attend school regularly. These supportive actions have ensured positive attitudes to attendance. Most pupils attend school regularly, including students in the sixth form.

Leaders have planned each aspect of school life to join seamlessly. Personal development is forged around what pupils need to prepare them for adulthood. Topics covering relationships education are sensitively adapted to match pupils' needs and understanding. Pupils' voices are heard and taken seriously in developing the school further. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from comprehensive individualised careers education, information and guidance. Staff work relentlessly to explore possible next steps or career pathways. As a result, pupils have the information required to make well considered decisions about their next steps. Leaders' ambition for every pupil is of the highest order. Pupils receive an education that strongly develops their social skills, healthy active lifestyles and independence.

The quality of leadership is excellent. School leaders, as well as governors, are extremely knowledgeable. They are driven to ensure that the whole school community continues to thrive.

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 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 July 2015.

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	122385
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10346373
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	George Murray
Headteacher	Penelope Derries
Website	www.thegrove.northumberland.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school ensures that pupils receive appropriate careers advice.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and experiences in school, looked at a range of evidence of learning, and sampled pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with a number of school staff, school leaders and those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.
- 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

Catherine Beard, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Common

Ofsted Inspector

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