

Inspection of Highfield Littleport Academy

Camel Road, Littleport, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 1EW

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They attend regularly, feel safe and secure. This is because pupils are well cared for. Pupils are respectful and polite to staff, visitors and each other. They behave well and say that bullying is rare. They know they can approach staff with any worries they have and are happy that concerns will be dealt with.

There are a wide variety of experiences to enhance pupils' learning and for them to enjoy. Activities such as learning outdoors, links with the mainstream school for some lessons for pupils in KS4, and residential visits are available.

Pupils achieve well. The curriculum is adapted to meet their individual needs. They become increasingly confident learners over time. Pupils are taught to communicate effectively and to practise the social skills they need to use in their everyday lives.

Pupils are well supported in lessons. Pupils are in different learning 'pathways' which ensure their individual educational, social and communication needs are met. These pathways are designed around the abilities, ages and stages of pupils' learning. Pupils grow in confidence and gain the skills they need. Many pupils who may not have enjoyed their previous educational experiences do so at this school.

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

Leaders have implemented a typically well-considered curriculum. Leaders have taken account of what pupils need to know, and be able to do, to be successful when they leave school. Pupils' learning covers a wide range of subjects and experiences and is planned in suitably small steps, so that pupils' needs are met.

The use of individual targets from each individual education, health and care plan (EHC plan) are reviewed regularly. Leaders keep parents well informed and involve parents in deciding relevant targets. Parents see the progress their child is making.

Subject leaders check that each step in the curriculum builds on what pupils already know. While the quality of education is effective overall, some subject leaders are new to their roles. New leaders are still developing the curriculum in a few subjects to make sure it is as ambitious as possible.

Teachers check what pupils already know and can do. Adults are effective in supporting and encouraging pupils to learn. Pupils are not afraid to try hard, and they have the confidence to take measured risks. Leaders have designed the curriculum with the aim of teaching pupils how to be resilient, creative and independent. However, the implementation of this curriculum is at an early stage. Pupils do not instinctively apply these skills when they are learning.

Reading and the development of pupils' communication skills are given a high priority. Pupils are taught systematically how to read and to match letters to sounds. This begins when they start school and continues to be a learning priority throughout their time at the school. Staff skilfully use alternative and supported means of communication, such as signing, symbols and pictures for those pupils who need it. This ensures that effective communication is an entitlement for all.

Pupils practise important life skills. They enjoy shopping in the local community, cooking and participating in sporting competitions. They are encouraged to take part in elections to the school council. Pupils express their views confidently about which clubs and visits they would like. Pupils learn to reflect on their differences. They learn to be tolerant and respectful of each other and their wider community.

Leaders plan carefully for the pupils' transition to the next stage of education. Visits to all local colleges/post-16 provisions are made. Pupils have extensive opportunities to gain knowledge of possible future career paths through large career fairs. Work experience, both outside and within school, is carefully arranged (although this has been interrupted by the constraints of COVID-19). When pupils leave, they are well prepared and transition very successfully.

Pupils are well supported on the playground, to improve their personal and social skills. Pupils play amiably together. Staff are skilful in managing pupils' feelings and behaviours. Potentially difficult situations are avoided. Consequently, pupils remain mainly focused during lessons and achieve well over time.

Governors and trustees are knowledgeable. They are effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of provision. Well-established systems are in place for checking that leaders' actions and improvements are working. Governors and trustees have an accurate picture of what is being done well and what needs to improve further.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and ensure it is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained and informed about all aspects of safeguarding. They are aware of the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with SEND. Staff look after pupils' welfare and know the signs and behaviours to consider. They know how to report concerns. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that all the support needed to keep children safe is in place.

The curriculum is designed to help pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. Pupils learn about the dangers posed by online games and chat rooms. Equally, pupils learn how to cross the road safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders are new to their role and so some subject areas are not as fully developed as the 'pathways'. There is expertise in the school that other leaders can use to build on. Leaders should ensure that the intended curriculum is implemented effectively in all subjects, to provide pupils full access at all levels to their intended small step curriculum.
- Leaders work on developing the characteristics of learning such as independent thinking skills, and resilience is yet to be implemented fully. Leaders intend for their approach to be incorporated into and across the school day, so that pupils develop personally. Leaders need to fully implement their plans and check that all pupils benefit from and build their personal knowledge and skills.

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	140882
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10212080
Type of school	Special School
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The Board of trustees/Local Governing Body
Chair of Trustees	Bob Dool
Chair of Governors	Lorna Robinson
Executive Headteacher	Simon Bainbridge
Website	www.highfieldlittleport.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Highfield Littleport Academy is a new, purpose-built special school, which opened in September 2017. It is co-located on the site of a secondary school.
- Although it caters for pupils aged 2-19, it currently only has a very small minority of pupils in the early years and no pupils in the 16-19 age range.
- It is a designated area special school so caters for a variety of special educational needs.
- All the pupils have an EHC plan.
- Most pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium is above average.
- The school does not make use of alternative, off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

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

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 met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior leaders, a range of middle leaders and support staff, groups of pupils and three members of the governing body, the Trust Assistant Director for Education, and the Trust Director for Education.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading and maths. We considered creative arts and PSHE as well as individual pupil case studies to gauge the quality of education provided. This included discussions with leaders, scrutiny of curriculum planning documents, pupils' personal targets and pupils' EHC plans. Inspectors visited lessons, talked to pupils and scrutinised their work.
- Inspectors analysed the single central record and met with the designated leader for safeguarding.
- The inspector considered 27 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire to parents, Parent view, and 27 free texts from parents, as well as speaking to parents as they brought their children to school. They also considered 34 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. Ofsted's survey of pupil views was not used.

Inspection team

Jackie Mullan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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