

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Springwell School

Wiltshire Way, Hartlepool TS26 0TB

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 June 2025

## **Outcome**

Springwell School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Zoe Westley. This school is part of the Extol Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Julie Deville and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jacqueline Butterworth.

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

The school's welcoming, happy and inclusive environment is palpable. Pupils smile, achieve well and are nurtured as valued members of the school community. Relationships between pupils and staff are exceptionally warm and caring. Staff work effectively with parents and carers and external professionals to meet pupils' individual needs and help them to achieve their very best. Pupils enjoy various enrichment opportunities. These include theatre performances, residential experiences, sports and visits within the local community.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Highly skilled staff support pupils to manage their behaviour well. The school fosters a strong ethos of respect for others. Pupils are supported to manage their own feelings and emotions sensitively and effectively. Pupils attend well and have excellent attitudes to learning. They thrive because they feel safe and are very well looked after. Their medical needs are catered for well. Pupils with profound and multiple needs receive exceptional support and personal care to help them to be safe and access school life.

Leaders have high expectations. Pupils make positive progress through the curriculum and flourish personally and socially. Staff are adept at helping pupils to develop effective communication strategies. Pupils learn to express their needs and feelings successfully.

They work purposefully towards achieving the outcomes stated in their education, health and care (EHC) plans.

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

Leaders have maintained the high standard of education. They continually seek ways to strengthen the curriculum and expertise of staff. All share high aspirations for pupils. Staff receive high-quality training and guidance to inform effective teaching and support for pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils succeed at this school.

The content for each curriculum 'pathway' is carefully chosen. Staff ensure that pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are met effectively and with care. Pupils' individual targets for learning are achievable and reviewed regularly. An increasing number of pupils attending the school have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Leaders are not complacent. They have identified the need for greater precision within the curriculum so that staff can respond to these pupils' learning needs with increased accuracy. This work is currently in development.

Staff are highly proficient in modelling and teaching effective communication and interaction strategies. From the early years, children learn to use different forms of communication confidently. These include signing, pictures, symbols and objects of reference. Leaders are keen to extend the school's effective use of assistive technology in response to the growing need for more pupils to use this way to communicate.

From the early years, children are immersed in the joy of reading for pleasure. Pupils' joy of listening to and sharing stories, songs and rhymes is tangible. Pupils enjoy multi-sensory storytelling sessions and learn to read with enthusiasm. Teachers deliver phonics with skill. Leaders' ambition for each child to develop a love of reading is being realised.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything the school does. Leaders ensure that pupils, including those with medical conditions, are safe, well and attend school regularly. Staff provide exceptional pastoral support to help pupils to socialise, make informed choices and behave well. Pupils enjoy using the sensory and soft-play areas to help them be calm and ready to learn. They benefit greatly from outdoor play provision, which helps them to regulate and be active.

Pupils experience life in the local community and beyond. This includes visits to the library, beach and museums. Pupils learn self-care and grow in confidence. They participate in performances and enjoy the range of school clubs and enrichment activities. They develop respect for the protected characteristics, including different types of relationships. The curriculum and extensive enrichment offer successfully helps pupils to broaden their understanding of the world and appreciate diversity.

Governance of the school is very effective. Leaders share their expertise with other schools diligently. Staff are well supported, and they take great pride in working at the school. Parents typically praise the way the school goes 'above and beyond' to make sure that their children have 'the best education and quality of life'.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The school caters for more pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Leaders have identified that this means that some aspects of the curriculum may not provide staff with the specific guidance that they need to respond pupils' needs with precision. The school should further refine the curriculum to ensure that pupils can continue to achieve the best possible outcomes.

## 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 predecessor school, Springwell School, to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in February 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	149243
<b>Local authority</b>	Hartlepool Borough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379430
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jacqueline Butterworth
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Julie Deville
<b>Headteacher</b>	Zoe Westley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.springwellschool.co.uk">www.springwellschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, physical difficulties, multi-sensory impairment, speech, language and communication difficulties and severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school converted to become part of the Extol Academy Trust in September 2022.
- There are currently no nursery-aged children on the school's roll.
- The school provides holiday club activities for pupils during some school holidays.

## 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, some curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the school business manager, the family support worker, the designated leader for safeguarding, the deputy designated leaders for safeguarding, and leaders with oversight of behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and the CEO of the Extol Academy Trust.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning, listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult and looked at samples of pupils' work and considered a range of documentation.
- 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' interest first.
- Inspectors met with some pupils and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's survey for staff. An inspector spoke informally with some parents at the end of the school day.

### **Inspection team**

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jill Bowe

Ofsted Inspector

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