

# Inspection of a good school: Coppice School

Ash Hill Road, Hatfield, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN7 6JH

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Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2024

## Outcome

Coppice School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Natalie Swearman. This school is part of Nexus Multi-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), Warren Carratt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Child MBE.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The school is highly effective at meeting the needs of pupils at Coppice. The school makes sure that pupils feel safe and are ready to learn. Pupils have severe learning difficulties and the majority of pupils have a diagnosis of autism. The school supports each individual pupil by making sure that they have access to different spaces, equipment and activities to help them to stay calm and to focus on their learning. The building has been decorated to mirror nature. This helps everyone to settle and concentrate. As a result, pupils behave well. Pupils are happy here.

Expectations for achievement are high. The school knows the abilities of individual pupils. The curriculum and activities that pupils complete are generally precise, well-thought-through and match pupils' needs. Pupils develop their skills well, often in very small steps. The school uses a variety of techniques to help pupils to communicate. For some pupils, this means helping them to choose between two options. For others, signs and symbols are used effectively to help pupils to express themselves.

In all classes, there is a focus on preparing pupils for life after Coppice. Specifically, students in the sixth form are supported in developing life skills, such as cooking, road safety and independent travel. Special care is given to help students to move on from Coppice successfully.

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

The curriculum is well organised and meets the needs of different pupils at school. Pupils are placed on pathways according to their ability. Within each pathway, what pupils are expected to do and to learn is colour coded so that teachers are able to plan work that matches individual pupils' needs. Expectations are ambitious, and curriculum plans match

the national curriculum where appropriate. Sometimes, however, the very small steps that individual pupils need to make are not pinpointed precisely enough. Sometimes, therefore, staff cannot check where pupils are in their learning with accuracy. The curriculum is brought to life through themes, such as 'amazing athletes'. Pupils have the chance to go on trips and visits linked to the theme.

Communication is at the heart of the curriculum. The school develops pupils' ability to communicate through sign and symbol. Pupils that are able to learn to read do so. These pupils receive effective support to learn phonics. Staff are well trained and use the school's chosen scheme effectively. Reading, stories and books have a high priority. Library corners, sensory story packs, songs and rhymes are part of daily life. Versions of texts such as the Harry Potter stories are also read. This is so that pupils can talk about these books outside of school with their peers so they do not miss out.

In lessons, teachers focus on developing positive relationships, coping strategies and self-confidence, among other skills. Teachers help pupils to remember past learning and they introduce new knowledge well. Staff in classrooms help pupils to practise their new learning. They check to see whether pupils' knowledge is developing or secure. Teachers also check to see whether or not pupils can use this knowledge in different contexts.

The school wants pupils to be prepared for life after Coppice. In the sixth form, there is a focus on developing life skills, for example. In addition, the curriculum helps pupils to develop skills that will help them in daily life. In art, for example, pupils are helped to develop fine and gross motor skills. There is also a focus on developing independence. In mathematics, where possible, pupils develop their understanding of money, time and dates, to help prepare them for adulthood.

Pupils attend school regularly and often. Sometimes, they miss school due to medical appointments. The family support worker is pivotal to the relationship that parents have with school. When families need support to help their children attend school, this is given. Pupils behave well. They are polite and focus well in classrooms most of the time. The school is effective in supporting pupils' sensory needs. Additional therapies are offered according to need.

Pupils' personal development is strong at Coppice. The school makes sure that pupils make visits in the local community, for example when shopping. Special events, like the visit to France and social karaoke, take place to broaden pupils' horizons. There is an active pupil parliament. Different 'ministers' help to guide school leaders to focus on issues such as the environment. There is also a focus on workplace skills and careers. The number of students leaving sixth form for employment or college places is increasing year on year.

Staff have worked hard to develop the pathways and the curriculums. They say that leaders have been thoughtful about their workload through this process. The trust has been highly effective in supporting the school as it continues to improve.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Sometimes, the granular steps for pupils are not clearly identified within subject areas or pathways. This means that, on occasion, the precise next steps for pupils are not identified when delivering the curriculum. Therefore, it is also difficult to assess exactly how much pupils know and can do. The school should continue its work in refining these so that teachers can assess where pupils are in their learning with greater accuracy and help pupils to make even more progress.

## 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 predecessor school, Coppice School, to be good in January 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.

## 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>	147582
<b>Local authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297494
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 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>	154
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Andrew Child MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Natalie Swearman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.coppiceschool.com">www.coppiceschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Nexus Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Some pupils attend 'The Bridge' for several days each week. Pupils are taught by staff from Coppice School. Here, pupils are able to socialise with pupils from other schools in Nexus Multi-Academy Trust at break and lunchtime in order to develop their social skills.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autism. Some pupils have additional needs, such as severe learning disabilities.
- 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.

- Coppice School converted to become an academy school in December 2019. When its predecessor school, Coppice School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

## 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and achievements, often electronically. Inspectors spoke to some pupils about their work, where this was possible.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, trustees, members of the central team of the trust linked directly with this school, subject leaders, teachers and support staff. An inspector spoke to the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors visited 'The Bridge', where some pupils spend time in lessons. In addition, inspectors visited the sixth-form area to visit lessons, speak to students and evaluate provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils (where possible); and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included attendance figures, curriculum plans, school policies, plans to support individual pupils, the school self-evaluation document and the school development plan.
- Pupils' behaviour was evaluated upon arrival at school, during lesson visits, at breaktimes and on arrival and departure in buses and taxis.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Angela Spencer-Brooke

Ofsted Inspector

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