

Vale of Evesham School

Four Pools Lane, Evesham, WR11 1BN

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics because each pupil is challenged to meet her or his full potential.
- Pupils develop important life skills such as learning to travel independently. Some read a bus timetable; get on the correct bus; pay for their journey; and travel safely to their planned destination.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid gains in communication using signs, pictures and words.
- The school is exceptionally skilful in enabling pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to be successful because it equips them to communicate effectively.
- Sixth-form students gain excellent work-related skills alongside valuable qualifications, including good GCSE passes. All go to college or get jobs when they leave school.
- Teaching is inspirational. Teachers plan creatively to ensure work is closely tailored to each pupil's capabilities. They provide just the right level of challenge to help pupils to move onto their next step in learning.
- Pupils intimate care and complex medical needs are met exceptionally well.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils care for each other and are incredibly sensitive towards one another. Their understanding of how to assess risks and keep safe is outstanding.
- All leaders, including the governing body, are highly effective in helping pupils to achieve success, both academically and socially.
- Meticulous and thorough checking of teaching and extensive ongoing training of teachers contributes to constant improvements for all pupils.
- The school very successfully delivers a wide range of innovative methods tailored to meet the disability and special educational needs of all the pupils.
- The school provides outstanding support for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools throughout South Worcestershire.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 17 different teachers and two teaching assistants. Fourteen of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also heard pupils read from different classes and looked at pupils' work with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to assess pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils (supported by staff) and governors. The lead inspector spoke over the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, statements of special educational needs, individual education plans, care and feeding plans, the school's improvement plan, monitoring information, the appraisal policy, all safeguarding documents and minutes of the governing body meetings. Inspectors examined 59 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with letters sent in to the school marked for the attention of the inspection team. The lead inspector spoke with a few parents over the telephone.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynda Morgan

Additional Inspector

Philip Winch

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school makes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. In addition some pupils have hearing impairment, visual impairment and complex medical needs.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder since the previous inspection.
- There is a Specialist Early Years Assessment Resource used for assessment. As a result, a proportion of children are assessed and then moved to other settings, some to mainstream schools with specialist provision, others to the most suitable special school. Some children continue their education at this school.
- The school has specialist status: 'a specialist school for cognition and learning – enabling inclusion in the community'.
- All, except for about two thirds of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are undergoing assessment, have a statement of special educational needs.
- There is residential provision for up to 16 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. This was not inspected as part of this inspection, but it is regularly inspected.
- Most pupils are White British and those from families where English is spoken as an additional language are below average. These pupils are represented across all the disability and special educational needs groups in the school.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, which is extra government funding for pupils who may be at a financial disadvantage such as those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school makes use of alternative colleges and locations to provide education for its pupils. Key Stage 4 pupils and sixth formers attend Pershore College to follow highly personalised courses. The numbers vary very considerably from year-to-year, reflecting the vocational subjects chosen by students.
- Vale of Evesham School provides outreach support to mainstream schools throughout Evesham and further afield through three different projects. This includes working in partnership with a children's centre and portage to support Early Years settings across South Worcestershire.
- The school has a wide range of awards including Healthy Schools Award, Eco School Award and Investors in People.
- This school converts to an Academy on 1st April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that even more of it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers do not take too long to explain to pupils what they are expected to do when they are moved from one activity in a lesson to another so that the pace of learning does not slow
 - making sure that every opportunity is taken to include a relevant writing task, based on pupils' targets for writing, in as many activities as possible in all lessons so as to extend their writing skills further still.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with exceptionally complex needs. Often they are unable to communicate and as a result express their frustration through extremely challenging behaviour. Some struggle to move freely. Helped to overcome these difficulties, they become ready to learn quickly and many are successfully moved on to mainstream schools. Their progress in communication, independent movement and personal development is outstanding.
- Attainment for sixth form students is very variable reflecting their wide range of starting points and special educational needs. For example, this might be a grade B in mathematics GCSE for one and, for another, an Entry Level 1 qualification. It is a similar picture in English. However, measured from their starting points each student makes outstanding progress. All achieve a wide range of qualifications, including valuable accreditation in vocational subjects. All are well-equipped to go on to college or cope independently and successfully in the work-place.
- All pupils whatever their particular disability or special educational needs make outstanding progress in reading and mathematics. It exceeds the expected rate of progress nationally for pupils with complex needs.
- A few read by pointing at a book with their eyes; others read symbols; and the most able have the skills to read text fluently and confidently at the level appropriate to their ability. The most able pupils have the skills required to work out how to read unfamiliar words and then know how to use a dictionary to find out what those words mean.
- Progress is exceptional in mathematics. Pupils' mathematical development builds in small, yet vitally important steps. All, within capability, develop relevant skills such as telling the time, dividing a cake into equal portions, using money to shop and knowing what change they should get. A few grasp the geometry and algebra skills required to be extremely successful in nationally recognised examinations.
- Pupils' progress in writing, particularly in Key Stages 1 to 4, although reasonably strong, is a little slower than in reading and mathematics, which is a measure of the difficulty some pupils have in using their hands to control their movement of a pen. However, with thoughtful positioning to access keyboards or, as required, adapted switches to operate symbol and word programs on computers all make at least good progress and many make excellent progress.
- Hand-over-hand support enables those pupils with the most complex needs to experience writing as they move their fingers through sand; whereas the most able pupils write well enough to achieve exceptionally well in a wide range of examinations.
- A few pupils slip backwards or only make very small gains of progress in English and mathematics because of the severity of their medical conditions or exceptionally complex learning difficulties. When pupils plateau everything is done to maintain their skills; indeed to push them forward in very tiny steps.
- Life skills achievements such as travelling independently and confidently; moving freely; feeding with the maximum of dignity; and adopting regular sleeping habits are valued and appreciated by parents and pupils alike.

- Through a wide range of vocational subjects such as horticulture, motor mechanics and catering taught both within school and at Pershore College, pupils gain excellent literacy and numeracy skills as they work out how much oil is required when servicing a motor car; read the instructions on the laptop when diagnosing a fault with a car engine; and follow the recipe for baking a cake; measuring out the ingredients required accurately. Pupils' problem-solving and critical thinking skills develop outstandingly well.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families who speak English as an additional language, are treated as individuals and receive carefully tailored support. They make the same outstanding progress as their friends.
- Specialist equipment and adapted resources helps pupils with hearing and/or sight impairment to make the same outstanding progress as their friends.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to pay for support to speed up pupils' rate of progress in reading and to accelerate their communication skills. Those eligible for free school meals achieve equally as well as others, including in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Most teaching is outstanding. All teaching is good. In almost every lesson pupils are challenged to reach their full potential through activities planned using the teachers' knowledge of their prior learning.
- Flexible planning and imaginative approaches mean that the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is outstanding. Teaching of life skills is outstanding.
- A specialist approach to teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorder speeds their learning. Similarly a sensory story approach using lights and interesting artefacts develop the communication and mathematical skills of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties exceptionally-well.
- Pupils are taught literacy and numeracy skills in all of their lessons. For example, on the trampoline younger pupils learn to count their bounces. However, on rare occasions, a very small number of teachers miss opportunities to use pupils' individual writing targets to include a relevant writing task within the work they have planned to help pupils develop their writing even further.
- Lessons are typified by high expectations and probing and effective use of questions, which deepen pupils' understanding. Space is given for pupils to answer using the means of communication most appropriate. Relationships in these lessons are excellent and so pupils are not afraid to take risks and self-correct, with support, when they make mistakes.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the sixth form is consistently outstanding. It is inspirational in the sixth form because teachers combine their outstanding subject knowledge and enthusiasm to ensure that all students are totally engaged in learning through relevant and interesting activities.
- For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, students developed the skills to create an animation of an animal. As they discovered how to import a background using a different program and add a noise to their 'sprite' as it moved across the screen, there was real enjoyment. With typical teenager eagerness, there was a shriek of laughter as students

enabled their chosen animal to make 'rude' noises.

- Very occasionally, teachers take a little too long explaining to pupils what they need to do when they move from one activity in a lesson to another. This slows their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning. Teachers are adept at removing obstacles that could interfere with pupils' learning. For example, they position pupils comfortably, when required, using specially adapted chairs so that they are able to reach the equipment they need to learn. As a result, all pupils enjoy the challenging and interesting activities they are given, whatever their particular difficulties.
- Behaviour is outstanding. With broad smiles pupils greet visitors warmly. Some sign 'good morning' and others say 'hello'. Pupils care for one another sensitively and with dignity.
- Incidents of difficult behaviour are related to pupils' specific needs. For example, when some children first start at the school they are frustrated because they cannot communicate. The speech therapy team helps these pupils to overcome this difficulty. As they learn to communicate, using signs, pictures and words, their behaviour improves very significantly.
- Skilful handling of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder very successfully ensures that they are re-engaged with learning when they wander off task. Teaching assistants reduce the level of distress such pupils experience by singing softly to them as they gently coach them back on task.
- Pupils' knowledge of cyber and prejudiced-based types of bullying is outstanding. Those, with the level of understanding to do so, speak out strongly against discrimination on the basis of disability or race. There are no incidents of bullying or racism.
- Pupils able to speak using words say that they feel safe. Others using pictures communicate that they are happy and safe. Those who talk using words say that they have an adult who they trust and can talk with about anything that bothers them. Pupils with the most complex needs indicate who they want to help them use the bathroom using gestures. Their parents strongly agree that they are kept safe at school.
- Within their capability, pupils are exceptionally skilled at managing their own safety. They know why they must wear steel capped boots and a helmet on a building site; how to use a chopping board safely in a kitchen; and always to carry garden tools with a sharp end pointed towards the ground. They know how to keep themselves safe when using a computer.
- Attendance is high because many consultations with a doctor take place at school. Absence is linked to lengthy stays in hospital or frequent off-site visits to specialist clinics.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's relentless drive to improve teaching means that even the outstanding teaching is getting better. Where teaching is good immediate action is taken to 'notch it up a gear'. There is no room for complacency and that is why this is an outstanding school.
- Tailored and targeted training is provided to develop individual teachers. They respond

exceptionally well. For example, the school's observations identified that a few teachers could be more effective with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in their classes. They received training and coaching within school. The language development of pupils in their classes has come on 'leaps and bounds' as a result.

- The local authority provides excellent support in helping teachers improve. For example, questions used in lessons are more probing as a result of training given by the local authority. Pupils' learning is deepened as a result.
- Through the thorough analysis of its work, the school has an accurate understanding of its outstanding practice. But, it uses this analysis to become even better. For example, analysis of reading results a year ago flagged questions about whether pupils could achieve better in reading. A new approach to reading was launched, teachers were trained, and pupils' reading has improved significantly as a result.
- Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The outreach coordinators help mainstream schools across South Worcestershire to meet the needs of children (under five-years of age) and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Thus, the school meets what is required of it as a special status school.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth-form are outstanding. The range of subjects and opportunities for accreditation in the sixth form is quite remarkable.
- Leaders make sure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed in every aspect of their academic learning and personal development. Therapists work alongside teachers extremely successfully to demonstrate how therapy can be a natural part of their subject teaching. Furniture is modified; equipment is adapted; and, as appropriate, switches are provided to remove obstacles to learning for all pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is outstanding. Deep reflection on children worse off than themselves has led to older students managing a weekly 'Fair Trade' stall within school. Links with a school in Uganda, celebrations of Islamic and Jewish festivals and visits to a local mosque raise their awareness of cultural diversity.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body challenges and supports senior leaders exceptionally well. Governors are highly skilled and have a detailed knowledge of how well pupils are doing, including different groups. They attend regular training courses to help them manage change and help the school to do so also. Governors are actively involved in finding out the strengths of the school and what could be even better. They shape improvements and have a wide range of lead responsibilities covering every aspect of the school's life. They ask probing questions about pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of programmes delivered by the school. A robust policy links teachers' performance, based on how well they promote pupils' learning and progress, to pay. The headteacher's performance is reviewed regularly. Governors make sure that safeguarding meets requirement, including risk assessments pertinent to a residential special school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117058
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	401636

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	32
Number of boarders on roll	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Simms
Headteacher	Ann Starr
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2009
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