

Reynalds Cross School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104131
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	377018
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	Frank Price

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	104
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlotte Vale
Headteacher	Jane Davenport
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Kinton Green Road Olton Solihull B92 7ER
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Price

Additional inspector

Rowena Green

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Approximately six hours were spent observing twelve lessons taught by twelve teachers. Discussions took place with a range of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation documentation and improvement plans. Inspectors took account of 46 parental questionnaires returned during the inspection, as well as questionnaires completed by staff.

Information about the school

Reynolds Cross School is an average size special school, which caters for pupils with a wide range of complex learning difficulties and an increasing number of pupils have medical needs and challenging behaviours. The Early Years Foundation Stage has increased substantially since the time of the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection children were rising three or above. There are a majority of boys in the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school shares its campus with a local secondary school and is in close proximity to a primary school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Reynolds Cross is a good school and the sixth form is outstanding. It has made good and secure improvements since the last inspection and these are now firmly established in the life of the school. The good leadership and management of the school has identified weaknesses, particularly in teaching, and has systematically addressed these through closer and regular monitoring. They have been decisive in challenging underperformance and this has led to raised expectations across the school. The school is not outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding. The pace of some parts of lessons is sometimes not quick enough and the use of questioning is not always precise enough to extend pupils' thinking. The teaching of reading has been an area of recent development, but practice is inconsistent across the school.
- Pupils' attainment is well below average, but they make good progress from low starting points. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, nearly all children either achieve or exceed their developmental targets set by the school. Pupils make particularly good progress in the areas of numeracy, communication and listening. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly and many enjoy performing in the school choir, in assembly and in the community.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning and to one another. They feel safe at school through the trusting and supportive relationships with staff.
- Teaching across the school is mainly good. Teaching is occasionally outstanding, but it is limited to a few pockets across the school. A strength of teaching is the way staff successfully tailor support to pupils' individual requirements so that all needs are effectively met. In particular the teaching of those pupils with the most complex and profound learning difficulties has been improved. The sixth form provision is outstanding because of its distinctive nature, where students enjoy their education and grow into confident and articulate young people who develop their independence skills exceptionally well through making good use of community facilities.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring better pace in parts of some lessons
 - making more incisive use of questioning to test and probe pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially at the ends of lessons.
- Improve the teaching of reading through:
 - more systematic planning to encourage reading in lessons
 - ensuring texts are appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities
 - further adaptation of books using symbols.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The school has three main groups of pupils, those with autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties and those with the most profound and complex learning needs. Despite standards being below average, all groups of pupils achieve equally well, commensurate with their abilities and the majority of pupils make two levels of progress over a key stage. For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress is strongest in the areas of communication, language and literacy, numeracy and their personal development. They increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them well and develop an increasing sense of self and one another. They enjoy musical activities and this also helps them in their language development. Students in the sixth form gain suitable awards of accreditation and develop their skills excellently to help them to be as independent as possible in the community.

In lessons, pupils are keen and enthusiastic, are highly engaged and enjoy learning a great deal. One pupil commented, 'there are interesting things to do at our school'. A strong focus on teaching important communication skills permeates lessons. Pupils develop their communication skills very effectively because they are equipped with alternative forms of communication strategies such as symbols, signs and photographs. Increasing use is made of portable tablet computer technology to motivate pupils to communicate in a range of contexts and this has also been helpful in managing pupils' behaviour through reducing frustration at their communication constraints.

Intervention groups have recently focused on improving pupils' reading, where appropriate. However, planning for reading in lessons is inconsistent and some books are too complex or have content which is not suited to the age or abilities of the pupils. The adaptation of texts using symbols, so that pupils can access books more easily is limited. There are however, some good examples of teaching word recognition and the letters sounds make effectively to younger pupils and pupils'

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reading for real-life situations, particularly when they get older, is more secure.

Nearly all parents are delighted at the good progress their children make and inspectors endorse this view. One parent commented the school had been 'exceptional in meeting our child's complex needs and provides the best educational programme to ensure her continued development'.

Quality of teaching

Teaching over time is good and this enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve. Teaching is lively and imaginative. Staff know pupils well and relationships between staff and pupils are positive and focused on enabling them to achieve as well as they can, by reducing their barriers to learning. The planned curriculum has been adapted well to suit the wide range of pupils' needs and promotes their social and emotional development well. There is a strong focus on the use of sensory based activities to stimulate pupils' interests. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoyed a lesson on planting seeds where they were able to feel the soil and smell crushed coriander leaves. A strength of teaching is the highly individual and flexible approach. Some pupils who have challenging behaviours find it difficult to access lessons, are provided with more tailored work, in a smaller group to better suit their needs. They have a highly structured timetable and symbols are used effectively to increase their understanding and communication. Technology is used well throughout the school to support pupils' learning and in giving them greater independence and confidence in communication skills. Music, singing and rhymes are often used to good effect to engage pupils' attention and motivation. Pupils respond well to music and they enjoy singing. The school choir provides excellent opportunities for pupils to perform in public and this makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural development.

In the sixth form, where teaching is outstanding, lessons are delivered with pace and enthusiasm and there are high levels of interaction and participation. Students respond enthusiastically in lessons and are able to identify hobbies which they can pursue in the community and share ideas constructively, for example to plan an event for elderly people in the locality.

On occasions, the pace of some lessons is not quick enough, particularly in sessions such as registration, where pupils have to wait too long for their turn and can lose interest. In these lessons, the use of questioning is satisfactory, but often does not explore pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently at the end of the lesson, so that plenary sessions are missed opportunities for pupils to recall aspects of their learning in the lesson. Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used well to measure children's progress and plan relevant learning experiences and these are recorded in helpful developmental learning journals. Nearly all parents rightly feel that their children are well taught and prepared effectively for the future, particularly through the sixth form provision.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Lessons are calm and purposeful. The changing profile of the school has seen an increase in the numbers of pupils where their challenging behaviour is a barrier to their learning. The school has responded very positively to these challenges with a range of interventions such as individualised timetables, and specific intervention groups, all of which have had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well and sensitively, and over time their behaviour improves, often because they have improved communication strategies and the curriculum is modified to meet their needs well. Staff have undergone significant training to ensure that pupils' behaviour is managed effectively and safely. Fixed-term exclusions are rare and pupils' attendance is average, as for some, poor health affects their attendance. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and to one another. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' moral and social development and whole school assemblies are valuable times to celebrate one another's achievements. In discussions with pupils, they were adamant they felt safe in school and thought school was very enjoyable. One pupil described the school as, 'the best school ever'. None reported any issues with any forms of bullying, including prejudicial bullying. High levels of supervision help to ensure pupils' safety. The school has a strong ethos. It is a cohesive community, with warm and positive relationships between pupils and staff, and this helps them to thrive in a secure environment. Most parents and carers believe their children are safe and cared for exceptionally well.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides very effective leadership. She has established many improvements, such as the new provision for the sixth form and has enabled outstanding leadership and management of this department. Senior leaders and the governing body have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where improvements are required. The governing body is knowledgeable and provides a good level of challenge and support. They have been actively involved in the monitoring of the school's work and have, in conjunction with senior leaders, developed a five year strategy for the school's further improvement. The school has a wealth of assessment data, but currently this is not presented in a simplified format to assist the governors to measure the work of the school more easily. Senior leaders and governors have undertaken regular learning walks of lessons and this has been used effectively to bring about improvements in teaching. Where teaching has been weak, this has been addressed effectively and has led to increased expectations of all staff and they have responded well to this. All staff receive a good mix of professional development, including behaviour management and keeping up to date with subject knowledge and developments in aspects of special education. This has had a positive impact upon the quality of teaching and the good progress that pupils make. Consequently, the school has a strong capacity for sustained improvement. The school development plan outlines a clear strategy for further improvements.

Alongside the general ethos of the school, the curriculum contributes well to pupils'

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spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum has undergone review to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills, particularly through new technology and accreditation for students in the sixth form are highly appropriate. The curriculum also promotes pupils' wider personal development effectively.

The ethos of the school is one where every pupil is valued and respected as an individual, and this leads to highly targeted programmes for all pupils. This ensures that the school is vigilant to ensure any forms of inequality or discrimination do not arise and the outcomes for all groups of pupils are carefully analysed. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are well developed and secure.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Reynolds Cross School, Solihull, B92 7ER

Thank you for contributing to the inspection through talking and meeting with me. I enjoyed my visit to your school. It is clear how much you enjoy school and the exciting activities that you are involved in, such as singing in the school choir. Your school is a good school and all the staff and governors are working hard to make the school a happy and vibrant place to be.

You told me that you feel safe and comfortable at school and you get on well with all your members of staff, who know you well and how to get the best from you. You receive good teaching, which is lively and imaginative. This means that your lessons are interesting and help many of you to make good progress, especially in being able to communicate well, using a variety of ways such as using symbols or technology. I liked the fact that you have plentiful opportunities to go on trips, mix with other pupils in different schools and for older students, that you can attend colleges or activities in the community such as bowling.

Your headteacher has done a good job in leading your school and is helping to make it better. She does this with the help of all staff and the governors. In order to make your school even better, I have asked the people who are responsible for running your school to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that more lessons are even better by making sure some parts of lessons are quicker and that teachers ask you questions to make you think more. Secondly, to improve how reading is taught across the school.

You can help to improve your school by continuing to enjoy school and trying your best. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price
Lead inspector

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