

Samuel Pepys School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110951
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378202
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2012
Lead inspector	Mary Hinds

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	93
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Knight
Headteacher	Mandy Green
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
School address	Cromwell Road St Neots PE19 2EZ
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mary Hinds

Additional inspector

Mark Emly

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons or part lessons, including sensory integration sessions, taught by 12 teachers and teaching assistants. Half of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spent time listening to pupils read, watched them being taught in small groups and individually, analysed their work, and discussed their learning with them. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leadership and management. Responses to questionnaires returned by pupils, members of staff and 40 parents and carers were also considered.

Information about the school

This is an average sized school which caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. These include complex communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and severe and moderate learning difficulties. A number of pupils also experience physical and sensory difficulties and have complex medical conditions. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are grouped in mixed-age classes in Key Stages 1 to 4 and at post-16; two Reception children are taught in a mixed Key Stage 1 class. Fifty percent of students in the sixth form attend the Ernulf Academy on either a full- or part-time basis. Pupils join the school at different stages of their education. Over a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national average. Most pupils are White British and others are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school operates an after-school club which is managed by the governing body and formed part of this inspection. The school has specialist status for cognition and learning, as well as having gained the Primary and Secondary Quality Mark for Basic Skills.

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

- Samuel Pepys is a good school. Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning. All pupils make good progress and older pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. The school is not yet outstanding because there is scope to improve the use of assessment information to secure faster rates of progress for some pupils in all key stages and to enable pupils to become more responsible for their own learning.
- Pupils achieve well in every key stage. They make outstanding progress in reading and communication. The sixth form is good and here, too, pupils make good gains academically. Basic skills are developed well in the sixth form and in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but less effectively in other key stages.
- Teaching is good overall. In some year groups, it is outstanding but there is a small proportion of satisfactory teaching. This is because some teachers do not explain to pupils what they are expected to learn or provide opportunities for pupils to review their progress at the end of lessons. Activities are not always well matched to different abilities.
- Behaviour is good. Staff provide highly personalised support to encourage pupils to become confident and to grow in self-esteem. Pupils' behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding. All pupils feel very safe because relationships are supportive and strong.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders are totally committed to ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can. Improving the quality of teaching is a key focus through regular monitoring and on-going professional development, as well as rigorous performance management. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked to identify where support might be needed to improve achievement. However, this information is not used well enough to pinpoint what impact actions have on raising pupils' achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement still further by improving the level of challenge in some aspects of literacy and mathematics, particularly for more capable pupils, by:
 - using assessment information to plan effectively to meet pupils' individual learning targets
 - identifying clearly what pupils need to do to succeed with their learning tasks so that they are fully engaged in learning
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities at the end of lessons to assess what progress they have made
 - ensuring that basic skills are planned for explicitly across the curriculum, so that pupils have regular opportunities to practise and consolidate key skills in a variety of relevant contexts
 - increasing the precision with which monitoring and evaluation procedures measure the impact of provision on pupils' learning and achievement over time.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment is low, reflecting the complex range of their special educational needs. Their achievement, however, is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils' communication skills are developed exceptionally well using a range of strategies including symbolic communication systems. Their speech is reinforced at every opportunity in order to overcome barriers to learning. Data analysis shows that there is little variation in the progress different groups of pupils make, or between key stages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form. However, some more able pupils do not always make as much progress as other pupils. Furthermore, there is some variation between subjects. For example, almost all pupils make outstanding progress in reading as a result of how well the school has raised the profile of reading across the school. Libraries and classrooms have an excellent range of colourful and well-displayed books. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and listening to stories. In the Early Years Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 class, children enjoyed celebrating each others' achievements while they had 'a picnic on the moon', clapping with delight when one child shared his sentence 'bear has a bath' while another pupil turned the pages of the story book.

Pupils are able to decode words using a variety of strategies, including using their phonic knowledge (letters and the sounds they make). Adults ask well-crafted questions to develop pupils' understanding of the text. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, although progress in writing lags behind other skills. Sometimes, activities are not well matched to the wide range of abilities in the class which slows the progress of some pupils. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to review their progress, both during and at the end of a lesson, which prevents some pupils from being fully engaged in their own learning. The school is committed to meeting the diverse range of pupils' needs. Targeted strategies that include the involvement of external agencies are effective in accelerating the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. Intensive therapy, including play and music therapy, hydro-therapy and multi-sensory approaches to learning have a positive impact on the skill development of disabled pupils and those who have profound and multiple learning

difficulties. In the sixth form, students have good opportunities to achieve national accredited courses to suit their interests, level of ability and needs. They are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are justified in their confidence that their children make good progress during their time at the school.

Quality of teaching

Almost all teaching is good and some is outstanding, which concurs with the views of parents and carers who are extremely positive about the quality of teaching. Where teaching is at its best, teachers provide excellent attention to meeting pupils' different needs and abilities. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to achieve by the end of the lesson, and they ensure that pupils understand this too. These teachers also provide strategies for pupils to know how successful they have been through the use of prompt sheets to help them assess their own progress, both within lessons and at the end of a lesson. In a Year 8 and 9 class, pupils were actively involved in their learning. The mathematics warm-up secured all pupils' involvement through excellent use of the interactive white board as a learning tool. The class teacher reinforced mathematical concepts visually, orally, practically and through the precise use of mathematical language. Assessments were used exactly to match work to meet the needs of different abilities. In this lesson, adults worked exceptionally well as a team to provide the correct balance of challenge and support. Skilful questioning ensured that pupils consolidated their learning, developed independent thinking and extended their understanding. Pupils enjoyed investigating number patterns and sorting hats into different sets. In less successful lessons, pupils tend to complete the same activities regardless of differences in their prior attainment which results in slower progress. In these lessons, although adults encourage pupils to assess how well they have achieved their personal targets, there are lost opportunities for pupils to review their learning.

Relationships contribute well to pupils' overall development, as they are confident of the support and encouragement staff provide. Pupils work cooperatively when they are given the opportunity and they have respect for their peers and adults which promotes their social development well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils display consideration for each other and for adults. Students in the sixth form are exceptionally polite and mature. They display high levels of engagement and cooperation in their lessons. Pupils enjoy receiving regular praise and rewards for good effort and 'special celebrations' in assembly for particular achievements. Here, they are given time to reflect on their experiences well. There are clear behaviour strategies that are responsive to pupils' individual needs and which encourage them to have greater self control. These strategies are implemented consistently by all staff and most pupils respond well to these. Parents and carers are positive about the behaviour of the pupils both in school and in lessons. However, some pupils did express concern about behaviour in lessons. Inspection evidence shows that this is the result of a small minority of pupils who have significantly challenging behaviour. These pupils have personalised programmes and staff are supported by members of the senior leadership team who are qualified trainers in a specialist system for

managing behaviour. As a consequence, staff are effective in diffusing challenging behaviour. Pupils have opportunities to begin the day with high energy exercises and sessions of 'sensory circuits' to help them to feel calmer, to help them to concentrate and to be ready for learning. The school works well with parents, carers and other agencies, including clinical and educational psychologists, to ensure consistency at both school and at home. Pupils feel very safe in school and are confident in the support they receive from staff. Pupils told inspectors that 'Bullying is not usual in this school as everyone is equal here'. Parents and carers also expressed support for the school's ability to deal effectively with any types of bullying. The after-school club provides a safe and secure environment where pupils enjoy relaxing or playing together. Most pupils attend school regularly and because of rigorous follow-up procedures, attendance has improved recently.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders communicate high expectations for both pupils and staff. Leaders are very well supported by the governing body, whose members are fully involved in monitoring the school's effectiveness. They are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body shares senior leaders' commitment to securing equality of opportunity, improving pupils' outcomes still further and ensuring that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life. Staff development and improving the profile of teaching from good to outstanding is central to leaders' work. This is securing improvement in teaching over time. There is a robust performance management cycle, frequent monitoring and appropriate professional development opportunities. All safeguarding requirements are fully met and reviewed regularly. Through good strategic planning, the correct areas for improvement are identified because self-evaluation and the tracking of pupils' progress are accurate. Most of the school's evaluations match inspection judgements.

Tracking identifies where pupils are at risk of underachieving and support programmes, including referrals to therapists and external professionals, are put in place to accelerate learning and promote pupils' personal development. However, this is not as sharply focused as it should be on pupils' outcomes in order to gauge accurately the impact of improvement strategies. Subject leaders monitor their subject areas and they, too, have a good understanding of how well core subjects are taught and what needs to be improved. This concerted effort by all leaders contributes effectively to school improvement and there is good capacity to continue to evolve and strive for excellence.

The curriculum is good. It provides a wide variety of learning opportunities and enrichment activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well, including through community links and partnerships. Students in the sixth form take great pride in catering for staff lunches whilst simultaneously using their enterprise skills to make a profit to put towards their imminent trip to Paris. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted well through personal, social, health and citizenship lessons. Pupils' cultural development is promoted through a range of curriculum activities, from celebrating different festivals to working with a partner school in the Gambia. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop basic and life skills across a range of subjects in the sixth form. This provides

personalised learning pathways for these students to achieve a range of accredited courses. The curriculum for the younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is also very inclusive, but in other key stages basic skills are not specifically planned for across a range of subjects.

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.



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Samuel Pepys School, St Neots, PE19 2EZ

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. You told us how much you like school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and finding out about what you learn in your lessons. Thank you for the invitation to lunch; it was the best Moroccan soup I have ever tasted. What talented pupils you are!

Samuel Pepys is a good school. This is because:

- your teachers know you very well, they make sure that your work is interesting and they help you to make good progress in your learning
- your headteacher and other school leaders know exactly what to do to help your school improve
- your behaviour is good – you know how important it is to follow your school rules to keep everyone safe and to help everyone learn, and behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding.

To help you make even better progress, we have asked your teachers to:

- check that your work gives you the right challenges to do your very best
- give you more information to help you think about what you can do well and how you can improve your work yourself
- make sure that you practise reading, writing and mathematics in all subjects
- check that all the work they do on your behalf enables you to achieve your very best.

We are sure you will want to help by keeping up your good behaviour, trying your very best in your work and maintaining your good attendance.

Well done to you all and the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Lead inspector

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