

Perseid School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	102698
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	376752
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2012
Lead inspector	Denise Morris

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Number of pupils in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zafar Hasnain
Headteacher	Tina Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2009
School address	Bordesley Road Morden SM4 5LT
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Age group	3–19
Inspection date(s)	19–20 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Morris

Additional inspector

Mick Megee

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 16 different teachers over a period of six and a half hours. Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body, teachers, therapists and members of the school council. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at: students' work; school planning documents; assessment information of students' progress and attainment; and teachers' records. The inspectors scrutinised 26 parental questionnaires giving parents' and carers' views about the school. Inspectors also took note of questionnaires completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Perseid School, formerly St Ann's, caters for students with severe and profound learning difficulties. About a third of the students also have autism spectrum disorders. A minority of students have additional sensory impairments or behaviour difficulties. In 2011, the school opened a second site. This now caters for the older students, aged 11 to 19, and is a seven-minute walk from the main site. Students are mainly from the London Borough of Merton, with a small minority from neighbouring boroughs. About a third of students are White British and about a quarter are Black African. The other main groups are from White European, Bangladeshi or other Asian heritages. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is above average. All students have a statement of special educational needs. A few are looked after by the local authority. About a third of students speak English as an additional language and a few are at the early stages of speaking the language. Nineteen different languages are spoken by students' families at home. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children aged three to five in the Nursery and Reception classes.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Perseid School is outstanding. It has maintained its outstanding outcomes since the previous inspection. The sixth form is also outstanding. High levels of staff training, very strong collaboration with parents and carers and other local schools, significant improvements to the quality of the accommodation and a clear focus on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection underpin the school's quality. Assessment is accurate, but the presentation of data does not make analysis of students' rates of progress readily accessible to leaders, staff, parents and carers and students themselves.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress and their achievement is outstanding, particularly in their interaction and communication skills, their mathematics skills and their personal development. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and students in the sixth form also make excellent progress.
- Much of the teaching in all areas of the school is outstanding. Teaching is never less than good. It typically extends students' skills very well and ensures that they have equal access to exciting learning opportunities within the excellent curriculum. The teaching of reading for higher-attaining students is impressive.
- Students, including those with autism spectrum disorders, behave exceptionally well. All students are very safe and secure. Attendance has risen and is above average. Excellent relationships and emphasis on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, staff and the governing body have created an exciting and welcoming learning environment in which students thrive and are valued. Leaders have managed the quality of teaching through high-quality performance management, extremely effectively throughout the new build for the secondary department. Consequently, students have continued to make excellent progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Present assessment information clearly and make the associated data easily accessible to all, so that rapid analysis of each student's progress is readily available to inform leaders' and managers' decisions.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to the school is extremely low because of entrants' disabilities and their special educational and medical needs, which impact on their learning. Student groups of all ages and from all ethnic heritages, whatever their disabilities and needs – including the many with autism spectrum disorders – achieve exceptionally well. Those who are at an early stage in learning to speak English make rapid progress with the language and are able to access the excellent learning opportunities available. All students, including those in the sixth form, achieve outstandingly well in communication, mathematics and personal skills, given their starting points.

Students, especially the more able, make very good progress in reading because of the introduction of a good phonics programme (linking letters and sounds) that gives them the skills to rapidly progress. For example, a Year 1 pupil showed awareness of the initial sounds in words as she read to the teacher. When she came to an unfamiliar word, she was able to sound out each letter to read the whole word.

Parents and carers are right to agree that their children make impressive progress. Students in Years 10 and 11 and those in the sixth form all acquire national accreditation before they leave for college. They undertake regular vocational work, such as helping around the school, and organise coffee mornings and cake sales to develop independence. Their courses include activities to help them in the future, such as accreditation in for example, hair and beauty.

Almost all students make excellent progress in communication because of careful planning, excellent quality of resources and communication aids and exciting tasks that ensure students want to talk. This was seen at the start of the day in 'Good Morning' sessions. Children make rapid progress in Nursery and Reception. In the Nursery, for example, children were full of enthusiasm to use their pre-programmed switches to say 'hello'. They were very keen to take part and excited by their successes.

Some of the highest achievement was observed in individual sessions when students each work individually with a teacher or teaching assistant, when an excellent range of communication aids, signing or symbols is used creatively, and work is fast paced.

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For example, when a group of younger pupils with autism spectrum disorders were using their picture exchange communication aids to play the game 'ten green bottles', they could indicate the correct numbers from their symbol books, finding answers successfully because of very focused teaching.

Throughout the school, highly flexible provision and very challenging targets enable teachers to devise individual programmes of learning for students. These extend students' skills because they are very well matched to individual needs. Swimming and music, taught by specialist teachers, contribute extremely well to students' well-being and to their high levels of achievement.

Teaching and learning

Parents and carers have an accurate view of the high quality of teaching. 'The teaching is of a very high standard' is a typical comment from a parent. Teachers regularly enthuse and inspire students and the excellent curriculum promotes some very effective learning. Questioning is a particular strength in many lessons. This was evident in Years 7 to 9 where a group of students with autism spectrum disorders benefited from excellent use of specialised strategies to engage them in answering questions. Students worked in their work stations and their challenging tasks were successfully achieved because of high-quality verbal feedback, different tasks for each student and highly individualised targets. Teachers encourage students to develop the skills to respond vocally or through the use of pre-programmed switches, signing or symbols where necessary. This practice was exemplified by pupils in Years 3 to 6, who benefited from individualised learning programmes as they developed their skills in using their switches to talk to others and respond to questions.

Teachers regularly make effective use of the rich range of learning opportunities that are carefully presented in the excellent curriculum. Well-planned tasks promote a very positive ethos to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and help students learn about their responsibilities and lead them to celebrate the different cultures in the school. Very effective links with a school in Jamaica, for example, ensure that older students, in particular, develop a positive understanding of other cultures. Links by 'Skype' ensure that there is regular contact so that they can share learning with students overseas.

Teachers are supportive of each other and regular mentoring is provided for new teachers to ensure that their work is of the best quality. Effective behaviour-management techniques and secure knowledge of each individual student lead to very positive relationships, ensuring that lessons are calm occasions for learning.

Students' work is assessed regularly and although there is plenty of information showing excellent achievement, it is not always presented clearly enough to show students' rates of progress over time. All students' files are regularly updated. Those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in the sixth form are of very high quality and form an excellent record of students' achievements.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour was judged as outstanding at the previous inspection and has remained so since that time. Students say behaviour is very good and that they feel very safe. Parents and carers unanimously agree that their children are safe and secure at school. A few students were able to respond to the inspection questionnaire, in which they said that they enjoy school, that behaviour is good and that they like their teachers. Students contribute to their own and others' safety by using resources, such as scissors, knives and forks and other tools, carefully. Positive behaviour is engendered in the friendly and welcoming way in which students are greeted as they arrive at school. The curriculum supports students' outstanding behaviour and safety, with key emphases on developing independence, decision making, and how to stay safe. The school ensures systematic and consistent management of behaviour through rewards.

The quality of relationships within the school is exceptionally good and provides very positive role models for students. Students, parents and carers say that there is no bullying of any kind at the school and no evidence of any bullying was seen in records over time. Students do not have the capacity to take part in cyber-bullying or prejudice-based bullying related to disability, special educational needs, sexual orientation, race, religion or gender. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school and obviously enjoy all aspects of school life. They are very well prepared for their futures.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are strongly focused on improvement and have a very clear vision for the future. The new, excellent accommodation for the secondary students and those in the sixth form is being used to greatly enhance learning and students' well-being. The new accommodation is enhancing provision for older students while creating more space and opportunities for younger ones in the lower school. A new pool and excellent indoor sports arenas are used very well by the school and by the community. They ensure that students are engaged and excited about their learning. School self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders' successful drive for excellence has sustained outstanding teaching, and achievement, behaviour and safety for all students, and illustrates the school's powerful capacity to maintain its outstanding outcomes.

Strong emphasis on enriching the outstanding curriculum has resulted in an excellent range of tasks to extend students' awareness of their locality and the wider world. Clearly focused learning opportunities promote excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in the students, reflected in the rich range of their work on display around both sites. The very well-planned 'arts week' is an example of the clear focus placed on spiritual and cultural development when students have many high-quality opportunities to work with real artists, dancers and musicians,

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culminating in a performance on a London stage. The range of therapeutic approaches has increased and a camping area has been designed in the grounds to enable students to experience overnight stays. These opportunities for students who, otherwise, would have difficulties undertaking such activities are helping to build confidence and independence.

Leaders have built relationships with local schools and some further afield. Extended provision for students through joint sporting and cultural activities with other schools is promoting enjoyment, competition and physical and intellectual improvement. Links for staff with other local schools have promoted joint moderation of students' work, helping to extend expertise. The impact of professional development is reflected in the high levels of skill among the staff. There is effective support and professional development for new staff. The school's care for and close monitoring of each student's welfare and achievement ensure all have equal opportunity to learn and achieve highly. Discrimination is unknown in this school.

Outstanding partnership work with parents, carers, schools and external agencies promotes the excellent well-being and achievement of students. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

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.



21 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Perseid School, Morden SM4 5LT

Thank you for welcoming us when we inspected your school recently. It was lovely to meet and talk with you. You helped us a lot and told us many things about your school, such as what you like doing and all about your work and how well you are doing. You also told us that you enjoy school and feel safe. I can see from the answers in the questionnaires that I received from your parents and carers, that you are happy at school.

Your school is outstanding. There are lots of excellent things about your school, such as your achievement and the teaching you receive. Your headteacher and the other leaders are doing an excellent job. Your behaviour is outstanding and I know that you all try to come to school every day. Well done for that.

You listen carefully to your teachers. I was impressed by the way that some of you showed us how well you can read. Some of you are very good at using your communication aids and you showed how well you can make choices and talk about your work and answer questions. Well done for this.

I am asking your school's leaders to make sure that your achievements are shown very clearly so that you, your parents and carers and teachers can more easily see how well you are progressing over time. You can help to maintain all the many excellent things about your school by continuing to work hard in your lessons.

Thank you again for your welcome

Denise Morris
Lead Inspector

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