

Mary Elliot School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104272
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	377052
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Sonja Joseph

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Valerie Penney
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Jordan
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2009
School address	Leamore Lane Walsall
	WS2 7NR
Telephone number	01922 490190
Fax number	01922 490199
Email address	ejordan@mary-elliott.walsall.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph

Additional Inspector

Robert Pugh

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed 14 teachers. Over one third of lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans and data on the pupils' academic progress and their behaviour. Inspectors reviewed the information provided by parents and carers in 31 completed questionnaires. The views of pupils and staff in returned questionnaires were also taken into account

Information about the school

Mary Elliot School is a smaller than the average sized special school. It caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs that include profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex communication difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder, and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Since the last inspection increasing proportions of pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A significant number of pupils also experience physical and sensory difficulties and/or have specific medical needs. The proportion of pupils from ethnic groups other than White British is above average, and the proportion of those for whom English is an additional language is significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has achieved a number of awards including the National Award for Learning outside the Classroom, Gold ECM Award and Investors in People Bronze Award.

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	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Mary Elliot is a good school. Excellent care, alongside wide-ranging and rich experiences, ensures that students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school’s overall effectiveness is not yet outstanding because of some weaknesses in teaching and in the use of data.
- Students’ achievement is good in Key Stages 3 and 4. They achieve well by the time they leave school and all groups of students make similar progress. The school’s focus on improving skills in mathematics, reading and communication through the use of information and communication technology is very effective.
- The school’s sixth form is good. Students develop skills that prepare them well for the next stage of life. Students successfully achieve a range of accredited qualifications by the time they leave the provision irrespective of the levels of difficulty they experience due to their special educational needs.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Pupils achieve well because teaching is based on staff’s accurate understanding of the curriculum and effective use of assessment information to plan lessons. However, in a few lessons the levels of challenge and support are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of the students and they do not always know, in detail, what they are learning.
- Students’ behaviour and safety are outstanding. Although some students may display challenging behaviour associated with their particular needs and disabilities, incidents are extremely well understood and managed so that they rarely disrupt lessons. The systems for ensuring students’ safety are extremely robust.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly through effective performance management systems and supported by good training opportunities. The curriculum meets students’ needs exceptionally well. Data are often used effectively, but the use of data at a whole school level to show the progress pupils make over time is underdeveloped.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, raise the quality of teaching so that all students make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - providing learning activities that are suitably demanding for all students in every class
 - reducing the length of time some students occasionally wait to take a turn or receive support in lessons
 - identifying clearly what students need to do and learn so that they are fully engaged at all times.

- Make better use of data at a whole-school level to:
 - enable all leaders to more readily interrogate it to see how well groups of students and all students are progressing over time.
 - develop governors' knowledge so that they are able to scrutinise student progress data and more effectively hold the school to account

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' attainment is low when measured against their individual starting points, in relation to age-related expectations. This is because the school is increasingly providing for students with more severe and complex needs. However, their achievement is good and sometimes outstanding. Different groups of students make similarly good progress; for example girls and boys fare equally well. Students' communication skills are developed exceptionally well through a range of strategies including symbolic communication systems. Their speech is reinforced at every opportunity in order to overcome barriers to learning. In lessons observed, students make slightly better progress in their reading, writing and communication skills than in mathematics. This is mainly as a result of an increased focus on communication across the school. All students make good progress in reading through very visual and sensory lessons where they learn about letters and the sounds they make and by sharing books and acting out stories. They show rapid improvements in their reading skills and many pupils are good functional readers by the time they leave school although they are unlikely to reach national expectations for their age. Over time, progress in both English and mathematics is improving steadily for all students, including those for whom English is an additional language.

The school is committed to meeting the diverse range of students' needs. Intensive therapy, including music therapy, hydro-therapy and multi-sensory approaches to learning have a positive impact on the skill development of disabled students and those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example, in an outstanding English lesson, students were developing the skills required to

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

understand the setting of a story through the transformation of the classroom into a forest. All students were enabled to use their senses to discriminate between the sounds, smells, textures and weather patterns of the setting. As a result, all enjoyed the multi-sensory approach to learning and participated willingly, meeting their lesson targets well.

At Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 (sixth form) department, students continue to extend their skills and confidence through specific programmes that promote their independence and allow them to sample different vocational skills. Excellent partnerships with local colleges and other providers ensure all students leave school with some form of external accreditation and are well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Quality of teaching

A very large majority of parents, carers and students feel that teaching is good at this school. Inspectors agree. The quality of teaching is good overall and inspectors observed some outstanding lessons. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and challenge students well, successfully engaging them in learning. For example, in a physical education lesson, basketball was used not only to develop students' physical skills, but also to develop their confidence, teamwork and restraint. Teachers draw on a wide range of strategies and methods, including excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to respond to students' different learning styles and to bring lessons to life. For example, students enjoy using visualisers to independently read text. Older students use 'talkers' to record their views and join in with discussions. Imaginative and fun 'light display' sessions take place within lessons to stimulate students' sensory awareness, develop coordination and their communication abilities. The staff's good subject knowledge helps them to plan activities that capture pupils' attention by being as relevant as possible to their interests. This was the case in a personal, and social care lesson where pupils were learning how to discriminate between different emotions using media clips of 'The Simpsons' and 'Shrek.' As a result, the students empathised with the thoughts and feelings of the characters portrayed. Teachers are successful in improving reading because they use a variety of teaching methods, including a phonics approach which links sounds to letters that are specific to the learning needs of each individual student. Further education students (sixth form) are taught equally well. This was demonstrated well on inspection, in the highly successful café, which is run by students, developing their knowledge of business enterprise and skills of collaborative working.

All staff use praise and rewards very effectively to build students' self-esteem and to give them the confidence to try new things, contributing extremely well to the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not always make clear to students what their specific learning focus is. As a result some students are unsure as to what they are expected to do and learn. In addition, students occasionally have to wait to take turns or to receive support and consequently the progress of one student slows while another is

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

being helped. Occasionally, students tend to complete the same activities regardless of differences in their prior attainment which results in slower progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although a small number of parents and carers feel that behaviour could be further improved, the very large majority feel that the school's strategies are effective. The inspection team found that students' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. There have been no exclusions or evidence of bullying for at least the last three years. The school invests a good deal of time in successfully promoting the students' moral and social development. Projects on anti-bullying and the school council's contribution to the behaviour management policy carry great weight with the students. An increased proportion of students have behaviour management plans and these are well formulated with cooperation from parents and carers to aid consistency of approach, and partnerships with other services ensure successful outcomes. These have led to a decrease in incidents of challenging behaviour. The analysis of triggers and strategies to manage behaviour helps students to develop the skills they need to understand and so manage their own behaviour over time. Students' excellent relationships with one another, and the understanding they have about differences between people, show that outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes have become well embedded over time. During the inspection the school was a calm and ordered place and poor behaviour was never allowed to interrupt the learning of other pupils. Students feel very safe in school and are confident in the support they receive from staff. Within their capabilities, pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying. Those who were interviewed were very clear that everyone 'is nice with each other' at school and they could think of no incidents of bullying of any type. Most pupils attend regularly and staff follow up absences rigorously. Students with medical needs are supported well to ensure a smooth return to school following hospital treatment. The personal needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are managed very discreetly by staff so that high levels of dignity are maintained.

Leadership and management

Effective self-evaluation ensures the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. All leaders, including governors, have ensured that the school has adapted well to the changing range of pupils' needs. Significant improvements in the school's work, including changes to the curriculum particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, mean that pupils are provided with a range of learning experiences that are well suited to their needs and aspirations. The school has also improved strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and introduced wider accreditation opportunities at post 16. Staff performance has been managed well. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, typified by the way staff have been trained and supported in developing skills to meet the needs of students with more complex needs. As a result, inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the proportion of outstanding practice is increasing. The school has successfully tackled the areas for improvement from its

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

last inspection and has strong capacity for further improvement.

Although some data are used effectively, for example in setting individual targets for students, the school is aware that data are less well marshalled at a whole-school level to show the progress made by groups and the full student body over time. Not all members of the governing body have the necessary skills to interrogate the data on pupil performance and thereby contribute to raising achievement. Staff strongly promote equality of opportunity and carefully monitor the progress of individuals and groups. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The curriculum is outstanding because it meets individual students' needs very well, enabling all to achieve well, particularly in communication. Over time, activities develop very well the functional and independence skills that students need in the future. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is considerably enhanced by the school's national award for learning outside the classroom. In particular the 'Tall Ship' sailing expedition adds a notable extra dimension by providing opportunities for students to learn, collaboratively, sailing techniques. The school has excellent partnerships with parents and carers and with health professionals, supported by very effective communication systems. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet all requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Mary Elliot School, WS2 7NR

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all. It was good to hear how much you value your school and how much you enjoy lessons. We want to say 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us and tell us how much you enjoy school. We agree with those of you who told us that you think your school is good. These are just some of the things we particularly enjoyed:

- the really friendly and polite welcome you all give to visitors
- the way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- your behaviour, which is outstanding. You try hard in your lessons.
- the outstanding curriculum: there are lots of exciting things for you to do and to learn. The teachers think very carefully about each of you, what you like doing and how you learn best

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

- check more on the data they have to see how much you are learning over time.
- make sure you all know what you are learning
- make sure you don't wait too long to be helped or take turns
- check that your work gives you the right challenges to do your very best

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

Yours sincerely
Sonja Joseph
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**