

# Danecourt Community School

Hotel Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 6AA

## Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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, particularly in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Those with speech, language and communication needs make significant progress in developing their communication skills, both through the use of picture symbol cards and use of new technologies.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress, which enables them to proceed successfully to the next stage of their education and, in some instances, reintegrate into mainstream education.
- As a result of a rigorous and sustained focus on improvement by the headteacher and his deputy, the quality of teaching is now outstanding; this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Because of highly effective class management by staff, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. Learning is rarely affected by disruptive behaviour.
- In the school's end of year questionnaires, the very large majority of pupils say they are well looked after.
- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership of the school, ensuring it meets fully its core aim of providing a safe and caring environment in which to develop pupils as individuals and maximise their learning.
- Fellow professionals speak highly of the impact of the school's outreach service and the continuing professional development opportunities provided by the school's Rainbow Court training centre.
- The governing body is outstanding in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons led by 13 teachers and 2 teaching assistants. All 13 classes were visited at least once. Three of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a small group of older pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of staff including heads of Key Stages and those with subject leadership responsibilities. In addition, a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local education authority.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the results of the school's own regular parental surveys. There were 64 responses to the staff questionnaire which were also considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, data on pupils' progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding, and governing body documentation.

## Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Originally designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, Danecourt is now increasingly catering for pupils with severe learning difficulties and more complex needs, including speech, language and communication needs. It also has a designated unit for pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) with two classes in Key Stage 2 and one class in Key Stage 1. In addition, it has a commissioned 'hub' class, based in a mainstream primary school for pupils who do not need full time specialist provision.
- The school also operates an outreach service, through which its staff provides advice and support for pupils identified as having special educational needs in mainstream schools within the local authority. The Rainbow Court training centre, also based at the school, provides an extensive programme of professional development across the local authority and beyond.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils are boys and most pupils are of White British background. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- A few pupils are looked after by a range of local authorities and the proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money provided to schools by the government) is well above the national average.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build further on existing practices to ensure more consistency in:
  - recording small steps of improvement in learning in lessons
  - ensuring all pupils are given sufficient time to respond to the tasks set for them.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- As a result of their special needs, such as ASD and speech, language and communication needs, children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is well below that in mainstream settings. Children make particularly good progress in preparation for learning through improvement in their communication skills, which prepares them well for Year 1.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment remains well below that found nationally in mainstream schools. However, in relation to their starting points, pupils make outstanding progress and achieve exceedingly well. Whole school data linked to national progression guidance for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs show that this is particularly the case in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). All pupils make at least the expected progress and most exceed this level. Whole school data also show that there are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by boys and girls or those supported by pupil premium funding.
- In addition, pupils make excellent progress in improving speech, language and communication competencies. A small group of older pupils reading to an inspector were competent at breaking down the sounds in words in order to recognise the meaning, which in turn improved their confidence. In an English lesson, pupils were also adept at this as they were learning to read and write 'little words'. Learning was consolidated by the pupils then matching objects to the words read out by the teacher, including recognising a 'trick' word.
- In almost all lessons seen, progress was outstanding and endorses the school's judgement based on the result of its highly effective monitoring and evaluation. Assessment and data tracking procedures over time are effective in supporting pupils' learning and confirm that pupils make this level of progress over time. Each pupil has individual targets set and reviewed regularly in order to assess the progress being made towards them and to decide if any extra specific support is required.
- The 'hub' class has enabled pupils who have made outstanding progress at Danecourt to continue doing so in a mainstream setting.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The key strength in teaching is the highly effective collaboration of teachers and other adults in lessons. Staff know their pupils well and, as a result of careful checking of pupils' progress over time, ensure they plan work that is suitable for every pupil's needs.
- Teachers provide pupils with activities that keep them interested and engaged. For example, in the ASD lessons, teachers included a variety of short activities, particularly suitable in keeping pupils on task, as well as actively encouraging them to make choices for themselves and to work one to one with an adult.
- A wide range of resources enliven learning. In a science lesson, pupils worked effectively as small groups looking at where different kinds of food come from. A wide range of excellent resources kept pupils interested throughout and at the end of the lesson they recalled accurately what they had learned.
- Teachers encourage pupils to be actively involved in learning. In a small group mathematics lesson, not only did pupils have specific targets set for them, they were also encouraged to feedback to the teacher on how well they thought they had done. In an English lesson, pupils improved their listening skills by deciding which of the sounds they listened to were different or the same. Further challenge was provided as pupils then went in small groups with an adult to compile a list of different sounds they could hear around the school. A modified small sided game of cricket in a physical education lesson enabled all pupils to take turns at batting and fielding. Those awaiting their turn were encouraged by the teacher to say what was good about the batting and fielding techniques being used.

- In Early Years Foundation Stage lessons, signing, use of praise and encouragement support children's excellent progress in learning and social development.
- Although teaching is much improved since the previous inspection, senior leaders recognise there are still a few inconsistencies in the way staff record and monitor pupils' small steps in learning during lessons. In addition, there are some instances of adults providing answers too quickly for pupils rather than giving them extra time to think before responding.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Well-established routines, along with consistent high expectations and highly effective class management techniques, result in largely outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- On arrival in the morning, as staff greet pupils, smiling faces are the norm and pupils clearly enjoy attending school, as evidenced by their eagerness to enter the building.
- Typically, behaviour over time is outstanding. This is reflected in the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions and only one recent fixed-term exclusion, the first during the last eleven years. Movement around the building and play areas at morning break and lunchtimes is safe and sensible as a result of high levels of staff supervision and, when appropriate, sensitive interventions. Lunchtime is organised well and pupils respond accordingly to the seating arrangements, queuing at the food counter and clearing plates and cutlery at the end.
- Behaviour management plans are used to excellent effect and policies and individual cases are reviewed regularly. Where appropriate this includes additional risk assessments and positive handling plans.
- Because teachers enliven learning with a variety of well-chosen activities and tasks, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. All staff are trained in de-escalation techniques. When frustrations arise pupils are dealt with calmly to ensure the learning of others is not unduly disrupted. Pupils are offered many opportunities for choosing and following independent and, in some instances, small group activities which develop further their self-confidence and interest in learning.
- The school is very safety conscious and takes all necessary steps to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Without exception, the few parents who responded to Parent View felt their child was safe at the school. Similar views are evident in the school's own parent surveys.
- Pupils feel they are well looked after, as shown in their responses to the school's annual pupil questionnaire. In addition, a small group of older pupils told the lead inspector that they all felt safe at the school. They added that there was no bullying and, that if there was, they felt confident the school would deal with it effectively.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average, and has been so for the past three years. Unauthorised attendance is minimal.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher's vision and drive for continuing success underpin the work of the school. All staff are ambitious, dedicated and committed to ensuring the best outcomes possible for all pupils. They particularly appreciate the professional development opportunities open to them.
- Leadership and management of teaching have ensured the profile of 'good' at the previous inspection is now outstanding. A comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation enables the headteacher and his deputy to identify strengths and the areas that still need fine tuning.
- Improvement planning has moved the school significantly onwards since the previous inspection because it is grounded in robust and accurate self-evaluation, and supported by the governing body. Fellow professionals comment highly favourably on the impact of the school's outreach work and the quality of training courses provided by Rainbow Court.

- Despite recent staff changes, leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision continue to be strong, thus ensuring the best outcomes possible for children in the two classes.
- The excellent and well-planned curriculum, as a result of revisions since the previous inspection, has provided a topic-based approach, while at the same time maintaining discrete subject teaching. It has led to much improved progress in pupils' achievements in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The curriculum contributes exceptionally well to pupils' all-round personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was evident when the whole school, together with a large number of parents, took part in and thoroughly enjoyed the celebratory harvest festival event.
- The local authority knows the school well and has offered a light touch, but effective, approach to supporting improvements since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - the governing body is highly effective and robust in its support of the school. This was recognised nationally in last year's Ofsted report on *School governance – Learning from the best*
  - governors keenly support whole-school initiatives, such as the curriculum changes that were introduced for the ASD classes and the new whole-school mathematics programme. In order to inform their analysis of the impact of this programme, some governors attended the same training as the teachers. Monitoring of the school's safeguarding procedures is also robust
  - the finance committee monitors very effectively the allocation of pupil premium funding, which is spent on specific provision to support pupils' health, safety, well-being and academic progress
  - along with the support of an external consultant, the governing body fulfils its role particularly well in holding school leaders to account for the school's performance and outcomes.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119035
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	401798

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Anderson
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Somers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5–6 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 232589
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 263822
<b>Email address</b>	roylk001@medway.org.uk



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