

Maple Ridge School

Maple Crescent, Basingstoke, Reading, RG21 5SX

Inspection dates

September 12–13 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Maple Ridge has maintained its good provision and outcomes from the last inspection. The school's leaders, well supported by the governing body, have ensured that the school continues to develop its strengths identified in the previous inspection.
- Pupils benefit from consistently good teaching. A strength of the teaching is how well all staff know pupils and meet the individual needs of pupils well. Good teaching, together with a well-adapted curriculum, enables pupils to make good progress, from low starting points.
- Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and this information is used well to ensure that pupils' barriers to learning are reduced as much as possible.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and many make rapid improvements in their behaviour when they join the school. Pupils stated they feel safe at school and enjoy it a great deal.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is promoted strongly.
- The school is well led and managed and the performance of teachers and support staff is regularly monitored. This has ensured that pupils' good achievements have been sustained despite changes to teaching staff. Newly qualified staff are well supported and are given helpful guidance on how to improve their teaching.
- The school has outstanding links with parents and carers through the home-school liaison support it offers to parents and carers.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Inspection evidence, together with school monitoring, indicates not enough teaching is outstanding. Teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe outstanding practice. There are inconsistencies in the use of signing and technology to support pupils' communication and learning.
- The marking of pupils' work and feedback to help them improve their work are inconsistent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons. All lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition inspectors observed pupils in unstructured settings such as lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority representative, senior staff and discussions were held with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), two letters and a meeting with one parent.
- The inspection team looked at a range of school documentation including the school's data on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation and development plans. Records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Frank Price	Additional inspector Lead inspector
Barbara Firth	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maple Ridge School is a primary-aged special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Increasing numbers of pupils are on the autistic spectrum disorder and they constitute nearly three-quarters of the school population.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. At the time of the inspection there were three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school provides an outreach support service to mainstream schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is outstanding and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - identifying and agreeing as a school what outstanding teaching looks like at Maple Ridge
 - providing opportunities for staff to observe outstanding teaching
 - using signing more widely and consistently to help pupils' comprehension and expressive skills, where appropriate
 - using information and communication technology more innovatively to help pupils' communication skills and academic achievement.
- Ensuring marking and feedback on pupils' written work are more consistent and given in a way which is meaningful to them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into school, often due to the excellent links and preparatory work that the school has invested in before children start school. They make better than expected progress in nearly all areas of their development, with particular strengths in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills.
- Those pupils on the autistic spectrum make expected or better than expected progress in both their academic and personal development. Pupils learn how to manage aspects of their autistic spectrum disorder more effectively, for example by reducing their obsessive behaviours or routines.
- The school tracks the progress of all pupils well and has clear evidence to show that all pupils irrespective of age, ability, gender or disabilities make equally good progress. Inspection findings confirm this view. The effective tracking of pupils' progress ensures quick identification of any pupils who are not making the expected progress and to investigate and address the issues rapidly.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons. Younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, enjoy physical education sessions, which develop their mobility and coordination skills. They also enjoy a wide range of child-initiated and adult-led activities, such as blowing bubbles and moulding playdough to encourage taking turns, making choices and interaction with adults and each other.
- Pupils make better than expected progress in numeracy and literacy as these are taught effectively each day. The school has placed a strong emphasis on developing literacy and communication skills and this has started to bear fruit.
- Pupils are generally more confident in their reading and writing. One pupil stated, 'My reading and writing have got better. I used to be a red reader, now I am green.' Pupils enjoy reading and try hard to decode unfamiliar words. In numeracy pupils use lots of practical materials to help them to count and add numbers accurately.
- Pupils' progress in communication is good. Pupils learn to use symbols to help them to understand and plan their day and to help them to make their needs known. However, signing to assist pupils' comprehension, for those who need it, is not always used consistently enough across the school by staff and this slows their progress.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive that their children are making good progress. Parents and carers commented on the significant gains in confidence and social skills of their children. For example, one pupil who was a gifted singer gained in confidence to sing solo in an assembly. One parent wrote that her child had made 'remarkable progress' in numeracy due to excellent individual tutoring.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is consistently good. A notable feature of teaching is the effective use of staff. Other adults are deployed very effectively to ensure that pupils' learning is highly personalised. Teachers are skilled in creating well-organised routines which pupils understand through the use of symbols. This does much to relieve the anxiety of those pupils on the autistic spectrum and helps them to understand when activities are due to start or finish.
- Teachers are successful in improving reading because they routinely 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 pupil.
- Staff create a supportive and positive learning environment. A number of parents and carers commented on how well their child had settled into school and started to thrive and make good progress, often after struggling in previous schools. Staff praise and encourage pupils often to promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem and successes are celebrated with

enthusiasm.

- Assessment is used well to plan programmes and lessons. In most lessons, planning identifies individual outcomes for each pupil, through individual education plans. Tasks challenge pupils, and staff work hard to make sure that pupils are engaged and participating throughout.
- While there are some good examples of marking and feedback to pupils, this is not consistent across all classes. As a result, pupils do not have clear guidance on what it is they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Senior leaders are in the process of improving the use of technology across the school. The use of portable tablet technology and other information and communication technology which could help accelerate pupils' learning and promote independent learning is not yet embedded sufficiently in teaching.
- Staff are skilled at ensuring that learning tasks are made as practical as possible. They make very effective use of sensory activities to teach concepts. For example, using jelly and ice cubes in science to observe and record the changes in materials when heated.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Nearly all parents and carers feel that the school's strategies for managing and improving pupils' behaviour are effective. At break times and lunchtimes, pupils play confidently and safely. They enjoy the range of activities such as the adventure playground and organised games. The close supervision of pupils and the positive ethos of the school mean that bullying is rare.
- Responsibilities of pupils are developed well. For example, Year 6 pupils act as buddies for younger pupils in the playground and they take pride in this role. The current school council members are newly in post and they apply for the position and sign a contract. Pupils who met with the inspection team were very positive in their views of school and on a rating of 1 to 5, where 5 was the best, felt that school was better than 5 for feeling safe.
- The school's success in improving the behaviour and the social and emotional well-being of pupils is evident. There are occasions when some pupils have outbursts, but these are dealt with sensitively and disruptions to learning are minimised. Some pupils have been excluded from previous schools, but since being at Maple Ridge their behaviour improves dramatically and no pupils have been excluded from school. One parent wrote, 'After struggling in a mainstream school for two years... this school is enabling my son to participate in 'normal' activities... he has been able to participate in PE and go out to play for the first time in six months.'
- Pupils' attendance is average, and where it is below this for individual pupils, it is usually due to prolonged illness.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. For example, pupils learn about looking after people in the local community. They enjoy inviting older people from a local home to come into school to share their harvest celebrations.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders provide assured leadership and management and have the confidence of staff, parents and carers, governors and the local authority. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school, although this is not evidenced sufficiently in its current self-evaluation format.
- The performance management of all staff has been well managed and has contributed to consistently good teaching across the school. Continuing professional development of staff has been linked appropriately to performance management and the school development plan. This has led to developing good expertise in the teaching and management of those pupils on the autistic spectrum disorder. However, senior leaders and governors are aware that, as yet, it has not focused on what turns good teaching into outstanding practice and that opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice are too limited. The support

given to newly qualified teachers is good and helps them to improve their practice effectively.

- The local authority has an accurate view of the school and rightly operates light touch support and advice for the school. The outreach support service that the school provides has been supported by the local authority. This service is highly valued by schools in enabling pupils to remain in mainstream schools.
 - The rich curriculum is well suited to the needs of pupils. It is particularly strong at providing, sensory, physical, creative and residential opportunities, so that pupils can learn to transfer their skills in a wide range of different situations.
 - Some areas of the accommodation, particularly the corridors, the hall and quiet rooms are in need of refurbishment to provide a more attractive learning environment for pupils.
 - The home-school liaison support is outstanding. Advice and support are provided to parents and carers to help them manage behaviour and improve consistent approaches between home and school. This has a positive impact upon pupils as it helps them to cope more effectively both at home and school.
 - Targeted funding for pupils in vulnerable circumstances has been used effectively. The progress of these pupils is carefully tracked and case studies reveal that pupils make excellent progress in their personal development, which lays the foundation for improved academic progress. This funding has enabled pupils to receive additional support in smaller groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body provides effective levels of support and challenge to the school. It has ensured that the performance management of staff has been implemented effectively and that additional funding has been spent appropriately. It provides challenge and support to the school in equal measure. As a result, the capacity for continued improvement is secure.

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

Unique reference number	116605
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	401603
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Norman
Headteacher	Debby Gooderham
Date of previous school inspection	June 2010
Telephone number	01256 323639
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