

The Collett School

Lockers Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1TQ

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough teaching is good or better, especially in the secondary department.
- The new headteacher's actions to improve teaching throughout the school are having a positive effect but have not yet resulted in consistently good or better teaching.
- A small number of pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils from similar starting points.
- The use of information about the progress of different groups of pupils is not used effectively enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Not all staff are trained well enough to help pupils to improve their reading.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has inspired the whole school to embrace his plans for improvement. Staff describe him as 'a breath of fresh air' and say that 'his enthusiasm is infectious'. Together with the recently appointed senior leaders, he is clear about what needs to be done to raise standards.
- The school listens to parents and takes their views into consideration when making decisions about school improvement and about how to help their children to develop. Consequently, parents are overwhelmingly supportive.
- Some pupils are helped to make good or outstanding progress from their starting points, particularly in the primary department.
- The governing body knows what improvements need to be made, and work closely with senior leaders to achieve these.
- There are good relations between pupils and adults so that pupils say they feel safe. They pay attention to and cooperate with their teachers and other staff.
- Pupils are well behaved around the school and adults manage any occasional difficult behaviour well, so that lessons run smoothly.
- Pupils enjoy school and say it is fun because there is a good mix of listening to the teacher and carrying out activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, they made a number of short visits to lessons to observe teaching and look at pupils' work.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, a group of teaching assistants and some pupils. Discussions also took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took into consideration parents' views from the school's recent questionnaire, letters from parents and 16 responses to Parent View.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including school policies, records of pupils' progress and information about behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pupils attend The Collett School from the Borough of Dacorum and surrounding areas in south Hertfordshire. All have statements of special educational needs.
- Pupils mainly have moderate learning difficulties, although there is an increasing number of with complex needs. A third of pupils have autism and others also have speech and language difficulties, or behavioural difficulties. There is an increasing number of pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- Pupils are admitted to the school throughout the year and a number of pupils aged 11 to 16 enter the school each year having found it difficult to cope in secondary school.
- The school has undergone significant change in leadership since its last inspection, with a newly appointed headteacher in September 2011, a recently appointed deputy headteacher and a new acting assistant headteacher.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with English as their first language. An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school receives additional funding through the pupil premium for those pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals. The school uses these funds to support its specialist base for younger pupils with complex sensory needs and autism (known as the O2 class). The pupil premium has also been used to create a similar base in the secondary department for those pupils aged 11 to 16 with additional complex needs and the required staffing to support this.
- A number of pupils are at an early stage in developing their communication skills and use a range of alternative strategies to support their speech including pictures and symbols.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is at least good, especially in the secondary department, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan work that helps less able pupils to learn more effectively and stretches more able pupils
 - questioning is used skilfully by all staff to check pupils' understanding and to inform their next steps in learning
 - pupils know and understand their targets
 - all adults are suitably trained in the teaching of early reading skills to ensure that pupils make the best progress they can
 - all teachers make full and effective use of support staff to help pupils to make good progress.
- Develop the use of information about the progress of different groups and individuals in order to ensure that:
 - all pupils make as much progress as they can
 - extra help is planned more effectively
 - senior leaders and the governing body have a more accurate view of how well all pupils are progressing compared with pupils from similar starting points nationally.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress that pupils make throughout the school is uneven and varies for different groups. Nevertheless, the school is working hard to raise achievement and it can point to striking examples of individual pupils who have been helped to overcome their difficulties and who have made good or outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in their social skills. Case studies and evidence from inspection show that this is a strength of the school's work.
- Pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium make good progress. The funding is targeted to help pupils with more complex needs and autism in the O2 base to make an exceptionally good start. This is because the expertise of staff within the base enables pupils to learn the social, emotional and communication skills required to be successful when they transfer to the main school.
- Pupils with speech and language difficulties and those with complex needs mostly make the progress expected of them. The school identified a few pupils falling behind in their development, especially those who needed specific communication aids to help them. Extra resources have been allocated and staff trained to ensure that these pupils now make faster progress.
- There are examples where pupils make good progress in reading, with many making increased progress as they move through the school. Those with the greatest need increase their use of symbols to communicate. However, some pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could because not all staff have been trained in how to teach the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Last year a few pupils did not make the expected progress in English and mathematics compared with pupils from similar starting points. As a result, changes have been made, for example, to the mathematics curriculum and the way it is taught. This is enabling pupils to understand new concepts so that they are now able to make faster progress.
- All pupils have good opportunities to work towards Certificates of Achievement in a range of subjects and some City and Guilds qualifications. All Year 11 pupils last year were entered for at least one GCSE examination and successfully gained an A to G grade, enabling them to access additional qualifications through courses at local colleges.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there are examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching, especially in the primary department, not enough teaching is good or better. Senior leaders are now rigorously checking the quality of teaching and have begun to take action to address any teaching that is not resulting in the pupils making good progress.
- Teachers typically use support staff well to work with pupils in small groups or individually. This helps pupils to make good progress. However, there are instances where the use of support staff is not well planned and they do things for pupils that they could do themselves.
- Staff generally use resources in a way that stimulates pupils and holds their interest. This is

especially the case in the primary and O2 classes, where teachers make good use of pictures and objects to illustrate what is being taught. Work is more practical in these lessons and this helps pupils to make better progress. Where there is occasionally weaker teaching, too much use is made of worksheets. These are often the same for every pupil so that the more able complete them quickly and have to wait for staff to help other pupils to finish.

- Teachers in the primary and O2 classes are very skilled at using methods such as symbols, signs and objects to support pupils who are at an early stage of learning to communicate. These are not as well established in the secondary department. This means pupils who need to use these methods are not able to learn as well as they could.
- In most lessons, teachers make sure that pupils know what the lesson is about and what they are going to learn. They mostly plan interesting activities. However, at times activities do not provide sufficient opportunities to learn or practise new skills, support less able pupils or stretch the more able.
- Pupils learn more quickly where staff show them what to do before asking them to try themselves. Occasionally, this does not happen and teachers rely too much on telling pupils what to do which means that some pupils with complex needs are unclear about what is expected of them.
- In some lessons teachers make sure that pupils know their targets and use questions effectively to find out how much they understand. This helps the teachers to plan what each pupil needs to learn next. However, this is not consistently the case. Occasionally, when all pupils have the same task, some do not make as much progress as they could because teachers do not check carefully enough to see how well individuals are doing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well around the school, at playtimes and in lessons. They work well with others. For example, in physical education they learn how to follow rules, keep themselves safe and to work with a partner and in teams.
- A range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, some of which are led by support staff, result in pupils learning to use their leisure time purposefully.
- Most pupils learn to listen and concentrate. For example, in assembly, secondary pupils listened to the teacher intently, followed instructions carefully and sat for a few minutes in quiet reflection. Pupils help and support one another. In many lessons, they learn to work together in pairs and groups. At playtimes, they share equipment and take turns in games.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils know about the dangers of smoking and drugs and develop an understanding of 'stranger danger' on the internet. The rare instances of poor behaviour do not affect lessons.
- The views of parents, both from the school's recent questionnaire and entries on Parent View, indicate that they overwhelmingly feel their children are kept safe and are well looked after by the school. There are few concerns about bullying.
- Attendance is high because the school consistently encourages good attendance and interesting activities motivate pupils.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because incidences of difficult behaviour do

take place and the school's records show that these have not always been well documented. Senior leaders have introduced a new computer program to help to record and analyse patterns of poor behaviour among a very few pupils.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has focused sharply on improving the quality of teaching. He has used the performance management of teachers and training effectively. There is now no inadequate teaching and there has been an increase in the amount of good and outstanding teaching over the past year. However, checks to make sure recommendations are consistently followed have not been frequent enough and there is still some teaching that is not yet good.
- The newly established senior leadership team has a very clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. Its members are ambitious, able to motivate staff, have high expectations and some exciting ideas to improve what the school can offer its pupils.
- Senior leaders clearly have the full backing of staff as shown by the very positive responses to the staff questionnaires distributed during the inspection.
- Middle leaders have clear plans to further improve the varied curriculum in both the primary and secondary departments. Changes to what and how pupils in the secondary department learn have been made. This is because of the increasing complexity of needs for new pupils entering the secondary department and in response to parental opinion.
- More time has been given to the development of skills, especially those needed for everyday life. There is now a greater emphasis on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Older pupils have more options for vocational experiences such as courses in health and hygiene, touch typing, building and salon skills.
- Good partnership with West Hertfordshire College enable Year 10 and 11 pupils to join link courses in basic numeracy and literacy, information and communication technology, creative arts and life skills. The curriculum is enriched further by partnerships with horticulturists, artists and musicians.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of cultural and sporting opportunities and experience a variety of educational visits such as to Kew Gardens. All Year 6 pupils take part in a residential trip to an activity centre while older pupils have the opportunity to experience other European cultures through visits to France and Belgium.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents and goes out of its way to build good relationships. It seeks their views and acts on them. Parental surveys show that they would all recommend the school to others. One describes it as 'a hidden gem' and says that it has allowed them to see their child 'shine again'.
- Since September 2011, the school has purchased perceptive support from an experienced school improvement adviser working for the local authority. This has enabled the new headteacher to undertake appropriate additional training and has supported him in addressing the areas in which the school needs to improve.
- The school caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have opportunities for quiet reflection in assembly and at other times. Successes are richly celebrated, for example, the excitement of two pupils going to the office with their good work certificates was shared by both the support and office staff who joined in their celebration.

- The school uses a commercially available scheme for analysing pupils' progress. It has used this appropriately to identify that variation in pupils' progress occurs, especially that some pupils make more or less progress than others. However, the school is not making full use of national progress data to establish a clear picture of the progress made by different groups of pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- has used members' skills, knowledge and expertise to challenge and support the school through a period of great change
- knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and is fully behind the new headteacher's drive for improvement
- ensures that the school meets statutory safeguarding requirements
- ensures that finances within the school are well managed.

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	117672
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401678

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

Type of school	Community Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Povey
Headteacher	Stephen Hoult-Allen
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2010
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