

Culverhill School

Kelston Close, Bristol, BS37 8SZ

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- School leaders and teachers know their pupils very well as a result of the detailed records kept of each pupil's progress. They use this knowledge to good effect in planning a broad range of learning activities which prepare all pupils well for the next phase of their education and lives.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress at the school. They do particularly well in mathematics, and in speaking and listening. Additional resources have been targeted at reading and writing and, as a result, pupils' progress in these areas is rapidly improving.
- Teaching is usually good and some teaching is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers use every opportunity to strengthen pupils' reading, writing and number skills.
- Behaviour in class and elsewhere around the school is mostly of the highest standard. Pupils say that they feel safe at school.
- All school leaders, including governors, are ambitious for the school. They examine its performance frequently and thoroughly, and have ensured that both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving over time. They use the pupil premium well to boost standards for those pupils who are eligible to benefit from it.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In both science and some of those lessons taught by temporary or part time teachers, there are a few instances where planning and teaching does not fully address the needs of each pupil.
- In those few lessons which are less well taught, pupils are not fully motivated to learn and they lose concentration.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 14 teachers. In addition they made a number of short visits to lessons when they observed teachers and their assistants working with small groups, and looked at pupils' work on display as well as the advice and guidance offered to them in visual form. They spent time with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with school leaders including members of the governing body. One inspector met a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met pupils to gain their views about the school. They talked to pupils about their work, heard them read and looked through their files and books.
- The views of the 16 parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire were taken into account and the school's own survey of parents' and carers' opinions was noted. Inspectors also scrutinised the views of staff who completed questionnaires.
- School planning documents and policies were reviewed including those for safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors discussed with school leaders and governors the school's own findings on its performance.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Pollitt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Culverhill School provides for pupils who have a range of complex needs, including moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and speech and language and communication difficulties.
- In 2009, the school gained specialist status in communication and interaction.
- There are twice as many boys as girls at the school. Almost all pupils come from a White British background and English is the home language for all.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A larger than average number of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for those known to be entitled to free school meals.
- There have been a number of recent changes in the leadership and management team.
- Most pupils come from South Gloucestershire. A small number travel in from neighbouring counties including Gloucestershire and Bristol.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in science and some lessons which are taught by temporary or part time teachers, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers always make the best use of the data available from assessment to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils in every lesson
 - in all lessons, teachers regularly check that all pupils are motivated and occupied with suitably challenging work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils enter this school with learning levels which are well below the national average. From their starting points, they make good progress over time and are well prepared for the future by the time they leave.
- Recent assessments show that pupils do at least as well as pupils in similar schools, in many cases they do much better. Over half make such good progress in mathematics that they are able to gain a GCSE pass in the subject. Others are successful at gaining good Entry Level accreditation in a number of subjects. Pupils were seen to be using their good mathematical skills in a history lesson, as they compared the number of pupils in an Edwardian classroom with the number in their class.
- Progress in life and living skills is carefully checked and assessed. Almost all pupils obtain the certificate of personal effectiveness, which prepares them well for the specialist courses many follow when they move to college, and shows their good progress in essential life skills. Many learn to use public transport safely which provides them with greater independence.
- Pupils make equally good progress whatever their special educational needs or disabilities. A large majority of pupils have language and communication difficulties when they are admitted to the school. They make such good progress in speaking and listening that many of them have that need removed from their statement of special educational needs as they advance through the school.
- The additional resources provided through the pupil premium have been used well, to provide additional hours of support for those pupils eligible, and this has ensured that they progress as well as their peers.
- Pupils work hard to improve their skills in reading and writing. Older pupils read newspaper and magazine articles. They have developed the skills which enable them to produce an attractive and informative school newspaper of their own, which is distributed throughout the school community. Well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used to good effect to write articles and design each page.
- Pupils are proud of their own sporting achievements and those of others. One pupil has been a member of the England wheelchair cricket team and others have joined national football squads for disabled children.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Typically at this school, teachers use their high levels of expertise and well-developed understanding of pupils' strengths and needs to plan lessons which stretch all pupils. Speaking and listening are appropriately given a strong emphasis in lesson planning.
- In a highly effective mathematics lesson, the teacher used his thorough knowledge to challenge younger pupils to construct a mathematical shape. They were encouraged to discuss their work, produce a plan and find a solution to the problem set. Everyone worked confidently to build a recognisable object. Their good efforts were celebrated by all members of the class.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers check carefully on how much progress pupils are making, and they give good advice on the next steps for learning. Teachers question pupils effectively and provide useful verbal feedback. Pupils' books are frequently marked and helpful comments are added about what has been achieved and what the next piece of learning will be.
- In a Year 11 English lesson, a teacher fully involved pupils in setting their own challenging targets. Pupils spent time at the end of the lesson considering how well they had met these targets. As a result, the teacher knew that they had learned well.
- In a very successful English lesson about polite and impolite words, the teacher seized the opportunity to enrich the learning by introducing an activity about customs in other countries. Pupils demonstrated excellent understanding by adjusting their thinking about words' meanings according to the society they were discussing.

- In most subjects, teachers promote good literacy and numeracy skills. A good example of this was seen in an ICT lesson where pupils were encouraged to read a poem and use their skills to highlight particular words and phrases.
- In a very few lessons, best use is not made of assessment information to ensure that tasks are well targeted at the needs of each individual or teaching is not sufficiently challenging to keep pupils motivated and on task. When this happens it tends to be in science lessons or lessons taught by temporary staff.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in nearly all lessons by helping teachers check how much has been understood. They work well alongside individuals and small groups to offer advice and support but they make sure that it is the pupil who takes the lead and completes the task.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils display positive attitudes in almost all lessons. Learning is very rarely disrupted. They are polite and courteous to each other and to staff. In those few lessons which are not so well planned to meet individual needs, their attention wanders which slows the rate at which they learn.
- Good manners and excellent social skills were observed at lunchtimes. Pupils helped each other to make good choices of food in a calm, orderly and relaxed atmosphere.
- A good number of staff are available to supervise at break times. Pupils are encouraged to enjoy social time together and, in the words of one, to 'chill out'. Very many pupils have learned to manage and improve their own behaviour as a result of good guidance and support from staff.
- A small number of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey expressed some concerns about behaviour. No evidence was found to support their views during the inspection. Staff who returned questionnaires were uniformly positive about the management of behaviour. Pupils believe that their own behaviour has improved thanks to the good relationships they enjoy with staff and with other pupils at their school.
- Pupils achieve well due in part to their good attendance. As a result of well-targeted support from staff, high attendance levels represent a big improvement for many pupils when compared with their attendance levels at previous schools.
- Many pupils know that bullying can include different things, including name calling. However, bullying of any kind is extremely rare and when it occurs is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- There have been no permanent exclusions since the last inspection and fixed-term exclusions are very rare.
- Pupils learn about safe internet practices in well-planned lessons. These are backed up by well-received guidance for parents and carers on how to keep their children safe on the internet and elsewhere.
- Important messages about staying safe are taught in personal, health and social education lessons and in assemblies. Highly effective and focused lessons are introduced at various points of the year, to provide positive teaching about staying safe, sex and relationships and looking after themselves. As a result pupils themselves are very confident in saying that they feel safe.

The leadership and management are good

- Hard work by leaders and managers since the last inspection has improved the good teaching and achievement evident at that time, and this has led to better progress for pupils in all groups. This trend in improvement has been sustained despite changes in the school leadership and management team.
- Resources, including the pupil premium, have been used well to boost rates of progress in mathematics, in speaking and listening and in reading.
- Thorough checks on performance by leaders and managers have provided them with high quality information about strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. They have addressed weaknesses by introducing coaching and mentoring programmes for teachers

identified as needing greater challenge.

- Highly focused teaching has been planned and implemented to quicken the pace of learning for pupils who are judged to be making insufficient progress, including those who are admitted towards the end of their school careers.
- All staff speak positively about their experiences of performance management and how their own professional development leads to improvements for their pupils.
- Effective training programmes have resulted in better teaching of phonics. This has boosted pupils' progress so that more pupils are making good or outstanding progress in literacy over time.
- Senior leaders regularly review and improve the good range of subjects on offer to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. They have used their specialist status for communication and interaction to improve staff skills and to introduce new resources, including appropriate technology, to improve learning. School leaders work hard at ensuring that all pupils have equal access to learning and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- All pupils participate in rich learning activities away from the school site, including residential trips, sports and cultural events.
- Pupils learn well about life in other societies and cultures and about other areas of the United Kingdom. Pupils are able to describe similarities as well as differences between their lifestyles and those of other people.
- The school invites parents and carers to meet teachers regularly, to set and review their child's targets. This means that parents and carers are well informed about how well their child is doing and that they have good information about how they might help them at home.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is good because governors share in monitoring tasks and know the school's strengths and weaknesses
 - challenges the headteacher and senior team and holds them accountable for driving up standards of teaching and learning
 - has been adept at targeting opportunities for career development for staff who demonstrate expertise and skill in class, with some promoted to positions where they can lead others
 - shows a good awareness of how well pupil premium funding is being used and the impact that it is having on raising achievement in aspects such as reading and mathematics
 - has ensured that a culture of safety and safe practices is embedded in the school, including internet safety, and that arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

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	131808
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	403819

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lawrence
Headteacher	Nicola Jones
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2009
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