

# Brimble Hill Special School

Tadpole Lane, Redhouse, Swindon, SN25 2NB

**Inspection dates** 28–29 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection.
- Pupils make better than expected progress, usually from very low starting points, because they receive good teaching which is lively, captures their attention and makes their learning interesting.
- The school provides outstanding opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream classes and for pupils from the nearby primary school to attend the special school.
- Pupils are provided with a wide and interesting range of physical education opportunities that all pupils can take part in regardless of disability.
- The leadership and management, including governance, of the school are good. The headteacher has made good use of external support and advice to provide impetus and rigour, which have been valuable in making good improvements to the work of the school.
- The performance of teachers is carefully tracked, with good suggestions made as to how teaching can improve.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding. They try hard and their enjoyment of learning is evident.
- Good teaching is supported by a well adapted and rich range of subjects and opportunities that pupils can experience.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In lessons, signing is not always used consistently enough and it is not always made clear to pupils what they are expected to learn in lessons.
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe other outstanding teaching or have a clear view of what outstanding teaching looks like at the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons, nearly all of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders of the school, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff from a mainstream school and a representative of the local authority.
- There were no responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, but the inspection team took account of a recent school survey of parents' views.
- The inspection team looked at a range of school documentation including the school's information on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to safeguarding of pupils.

## Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Buist

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Brimble Hill School is a primary-aged special school for pupils with severe and complex learning needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The accommodation is modern and purpose built.
- An increasing number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is roughly the same as that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold award for its work in creative subjects such as music and art.
- No alternative provision is used by the school, although the school has links with another mainstream primary school on the campus.

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

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching at the school to further improve pupils' progress by:
  - using signing with pupils more consistently across the school
  - making sure teachers explain clearly what pupils are expected to learn in lessons
  - increasing the opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding teaching
  - developing a whole school understanding of what outstanding teaching looks like at the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of pupils in the school are functioning at extremely early developmental levels, even in comparison to similar special schools nationally. This is because more-able pupils are educated in resourced provision attached to mainstream schools across the county.
- Given their needs, pupils make better than expected progress, because their needs are carefully considered and imaginative and purposeful experiences are provided for them. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, who also have a physical disability, are positioned in vertical body boards to enable them to take part in lessons alongside other class members.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress. This is because the learning environment is vibrant, stimulating and provides a wide range of activities that are led by adults as well as opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. For example, one child learned how to climb stairs by using the outside play equipment. Signing is used very well to increase children's understanding and communication skills.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in physical education because all activities are modified so that all pupils can take full part, regardless of ability. Residential experiences, for example, enable pupils in wheelchairs to abseil down slopes, and activities such as sailing and canoeing are modified so no one is disadvantaged.
- Pupils who receive additional pupil premium funding make better than expected progress in a wide range of areas. This has been used to provide residential trips and to improve their attendance at school. School records show that these pupils achieve equally as well as other pupils, enabling them to close gaps in achievement.
- Pupils' enjoyment in lessons is evident. Pupils are keen to take part in learning. One pupil with complex learning needs enjoyed operating a computer tablet to make fireworks explode on the screen. She then used symbols to indicate that she wanted the activity to continue.
- All pupils irrespective of their background, ethnicity, gender or disability, achieve equally well. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders follow a highly structured routine and they make good progress in their personal development by developing better cooperation and communication skills.
- Pupils enjoy reading simple stories. The most able pupils can read easy sentences and recall the main elements of a story. Most pupils need some help to breakdown words. All pupils show an enjoyment of books and less able pupils use pictures or symbols to help them follow a story.
- Signing is used well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but it is not always used consistently enough throughout the rest of the school with all pupils and this slows their learning.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The school's facilities and resources are outstanding. These are used well by staff and make a strong contribution to the good quality teaching. Excellent use is made of group work and most lessons have a period of time when pupils work in small groups, supported by an adult. The accommodation lends itself well to this as there is space and smaller rooms where groups of pupils can work. This allows the individual needs of pupils to be met well.
- Staff make exceptional use of resources. This not only includes the use of sophisticated technology, but also everyday items such as sparkling materials to encourage pupils to reach out and explore.
- Staff are very skilled at the physical management and positioning of pupils so that the most disabled pupils can access learning in a way which suits them best.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used creatively both to bring learning to life and to create motivating opportunities for pupils to communicate. Switches, interactive

whiteboards and sensory rooms are highly motivating for pupils and they make good responses to these experiences.

- Teaching is consistently lively and captures the attention of pupils well. As a result, pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners.
- Staff know and understand pupils well and use this detailed knowledge to get the best out of pupils.
- The objectives for lessons are not always sharp enough and this slows learning. On occasions, for example, the objectives describe what pupils are going to do in a lesson rather than what they should learn.

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

- While there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for, this is not at the expense of setting good levels of challenge and expectations for pupils.
- There are valuable opportunities for pupils to attend lessons at the on-site mainstream primary school and for pupils from the primary school to attend Brimble Hill. These successfully develop pupils' social skills by increasing their self-confidence and giving them a broader range of experiences. For example, pupils enjoyed taking part in wheelchair dancing with students from a local further education college.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and to one another. They enjoy school a great deal. This was summed up by one parent, 'The school and the staff are amazing. I love it and my son loves it.'
- Lunchtimes are used as valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their social and independence skills. They are pleasant social occasions and in the playground they have plentiful opportunities to take part in structured play activities.
- Pupils feel extremely safe. All forms of bullying are rare and pupils have a deep trust in the adults who look after them. Close supervision of pupils ensures that the welfare and safety of pupils are as good as possible.
- The attendance for most pupils is above average. Where this is not the case, this is due to ill health or periods of hospitalisation.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strongly promoted through end-of-day assemblies. The school also promotes these aspects exceptionally well through its creative curriculum of art, music and dance.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team, has brought about good improvements to all aspects of the school, so that it is a positive and vibrant learning environment where pupils can thrive.
- The headteacher has made good use of external advice and support to speed up improvements and to enable staff to reflect and improve on their practice.
- The performance management of staff has been implemented well and this has improved teaching across the school. The training of staff has been linked closely to their individual needs and the needs of the pupils. Staff have developed good expertise in the teaching and management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Performance management of teachers has not yet focused on what turns good teaching into outstanding practice, and opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice are limited. There is no clear and shared understanding of what the features of outstanding teaching may look like across the school.

- Additional funding for pupils in vulnerable circumstances has been used well. The academic progress of these pupils is carefully tracked to make sure the funding is being wisely spent. The outstanding personal development of pupils indicates that no pupil is disadvantaged and all have equal opportunities.
  - The local authority has provided effective support for the school and has funded external advice and support, which has benefited the school and helped it to improve.
  - The school has invested a substantial amount of time and effort to make sure that the subjects and experiences offered to pupils meet their needs. For example, the curriculum has been carefully constructed to ensure the needs of those pupils on the autistic spectrum have structured routines and those pupils with complex and profound learning difficulties have stimulating and rich sensory experiences.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governors have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school. They know where the strengths lie and where improvements need to be made. This is because governor visits have focused on how well teaching engages pupils, for example in a speech and language session. They monitor staff sickness and absence carefully. They have been informed by the headteacher as to what the additional funding for pupils has been spent on and know that this funding has enabled these pupils to maintain their progress in line with other pupils. They understand that the school may be facing budgetary reductions and are making sensible preparations for this eventuality. Governors have been involved in the performance management of staff and have ensured that pay and promotion relates to appropriate performance. Governors have accessed training on safeguarding, finance and other courses to keep themselves up to date. The school does not have a full complement of governors, but is working hard to address this issue.
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## 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>	126556
<b>Local authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	402405

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 Special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	67
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Easter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Paul
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 493900
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