

Spring Common School

American Lane, Huntingdon, PE29 1TQ

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- Students make outstanding progress, particularly in communication skills. This means that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.
- Students make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. They apply what they have learned in these subjects in all lessons and this enables them to make remarkable achievements in other subjects.
- Teaching is outstanding and this is a significant improvement from the last inspection. Teachers plan activities meticulously for each individual student which ensures that each makes at least good progress. Other adults make an exceptional contribution to student's outstanding progress.
- Students work very hard to live up to the high expectations set for them to ensure that their behaviour is outstanding. Learning is rarely affected by disruptive behaviour. Students feel very safe and secure and well cared for.
- The sixth form is outstanding and students make exceptionally good progress here because they spend an increasing amount of time applying their skills in an adult situation.
- Partnerships with parents, health professionals, and local colleges and schools in the region impact well on achievement.
- The plans made for students are very well organised and contribute very well to their rapid progress. They are enriched by a wide variety of different experiences both within school and in other locations.
- The headteacher is very ambitious for the achievement of the students. Management of the quality of teaching is highly effective and this has ensured that students have made ever increasing progress since the last inspection.
- The governing body makes an excellent contribution to the leadership of the school. It understands clearly what is happening in school and makes decisions based on the first hand knowledge it gathers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors took account of the school’s procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and looked at headteacher’s reports to the governing body, the development plan, minutes of meetings, records of lesson observations, targets set for teachers, and documents that track students’ progress
- The inspection team observed 13 lessons including three jointly with the headteacher, listened to a pupil read and examined students’ work in books. Inspectors held discussions with parents including a telephone conversation with one. They also held discussions with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a member of the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke with students and the lead inspector took account of seven letters from parents as well as 20 responses from Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Pauline Hilling-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Mayle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The large majority of students have either severe learning difficulties or autism. A small minority of students have profound and multiple learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties and a small minority have either additional behavioural difficulties, visual or hearing impairment or complex medical conditions.
- The majority of students are boys.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with national averages.
- The proportions of students eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school holds Eco Schools Green Flag Award, International Award Intermediate, Sportsmark and Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the existing web-site so that it can be used more effectively and extensively by both parents and students and other visitors to find out information about the school and its activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- As a result of their special educational needs and disabilities all students are working well below national expectations when they start at the school. The majority of students make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science when compared to the progress of students nationally with similar starting points.
- Students with autism make outstanding progress as a result of arrangements in place to ensure a calm and stress free classroom space. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties likewise make outstanding progress because arrangements to record and build on the very small steps of progress they make are highly effective.
- The vast majority of students make outstanding progress in personal and social development especially in their ability to understand what is happening in the world around them. They are able to do this because they make exceptional progress in their communication skills.
- Progress in communication and reading are strengths because of the special techniques staff use to help students develop their skills. Students apply these skills extensively in other lessons and become very proficient in communicating with others and reading simple texts.
- Children's interests are nurtured carefully in the early years in partnership with parents. This means that they begin to make rapid progress and get off to an excellent start.
- Each individual student's talents in English and mathematics are developed carefully as they progress through the school. From Key Stage 3 onwards student's progress in applying these skills in real situations grows rapidly. This means that every student leaves with a qualification in the functional use of both English and mathematics which is exceptionally useful.
- Students who receive support from pupil premium funding and those whose home language is not English learn at the same outstanding rate as other students. The very small difference between the achievement of students eligible for extra funds, such as the pupil premium, and other students is closing as a result of them being able to work in a small group with additional staff if necessary.
- There is no difference between the achievement of any age group or between that of boys and girls. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well because the school is highly effective in understanding how to promote equality of opportunity for all.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding. The percentage of outstanding teaching has increased each year since the last inspection.
- Teachers have very high expectations of what students will do and achieve in lessons. This is reflected in the detailed high quality planning documents which specify activities at just the right level for every student.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to systematically check understanding as the lesson proceeds. They modify their plans skilfully in line with this information to ensure that each

student is achieving very well at all times. For example, in a mathematics lesson students solved increasingly complex problems while extending their understanding of subtraction at the same time as a result of the excellent knowledge of the teacher.

- Teachers and other adults give students detailed information throughout the lesson about how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. Photographs are often taken to show what students have achieved. These are accompanied by detailed notes to explain what was happening at the time. Very occasionally written information for students in books does not specify what the student should do next.
- Teachers make sure students have a visual image of the desired outcome either by modelling or by ensuring that the students have experienced the real object or situation. For example, in a physical education lesson the teacher demonstrated the level of body control needed to perform a gymnastic sequence. As a result students were able to improve their own performances by holding a balance for a longer period of time.
- Students are fully involved in discussing and with staff what they and their peers have achieved. In later years they are involved in identifying and recording of their progress. For example, in the sixth form a student discussed and agreed with the adult which elements of the level she had demonstrated in preparing a meal.
- Students very much enjoy lessons because they are often inspired, such as when they sing solos or reflect on how to describe their creative feeling about their art. They appreciate the balance between learning and fun and say 'teachers have a joke when you work'.
- Typically all lessons include students applying their personal and social skills as well as applying their English and mathematics skills at their highest level. As a result students concentrate for long periods and make rapid progress in all subjects.
- Parents say they often recognise at home the rapid progress being made in personal development at school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are curious and very polite. They are keen to give adults full and detailed information in response to questions. They try exceptionally hard to live up to the high expectations set for them.
- Students are very proud of the school's achievements. They point out the school's Eco Green Flag flying at the top of the flagpole with pride and point out how everyone contributed to its achievement.
- Staff are highly skilled in maintaining a positive atmosphere at all times. This is because they use special techniques to ensure students are calm and stress free. Also, special activities when students first arrive in school in the morning such as following a carefully planned circuit of physical-sensory activity are very effective in ensuring that students are able to make a good start in their learning.
- Well established routines make a significant contribution to some students with autism and additional behavioural difficulties showing remarkable improvements in their behaviour. Bullying is rare and dealt with sensitively in partnership with parents. For example a Facebook working group has recently been set up to ensure that students are safe from on-line bullying.

- All students feel safe as a result of priority given to it. Students say 'teachers watch out for you'.
- Exclusion is very rare and attendance is above average.
- Students learn to keep themselves and others safe when they are out in the community. For example they understand that they must wait and look for traffic before crossing the road. Students with additional visual difficulties are carefully trained in special ways to be safe when out on the road such as through the use of a long cane to detect the change in pavement texture.
- The vast majority of parents say that they are very pleased with the communication, respect and care the school gives to their child. A small number of parents made sure they spoke with an inspector to say how very impressed they were.
- The plans for personal, health, social and emotional development is at the centre of what the school does. As students progress through the school they build up an ever increasing understanding of how for example to express their needs and wishes.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an exceptional leader. She is highly committed to school improvement. She is very ably supported by a skilled team of senior leaders. Leadership of English and mathematics is very strong and contributes to students' exceptional progress.
- The school makes full and effective use of the nationally published information showing the progress of students with a similar starting point and comparing it with the students in the school.
- The school's system for tracking the progress of students is meticulous. They ensure that any student at risk of underachieving is quickly identified and procedures are put in place to prevent this happening.
- The leadership of teaching and performance is highly effective. Procedures to check the quality of teaching are extensive and thorough and enable leaders to provide detailed and helpful feedback to support teachers in improving their practice. There is a good link between teachers' performance and pay.
- The staff support each other exceptionally well. They share the best ways to ensure that students achieve as much as they can by allowing other staff to observe them at work. Leaders ensure that additional funds, such as the pupil premium are used to good effect by providing special classes and groups. Staff review the progress of students who attend these groups to check that their achievement has been accelerated, and it is clear that the way the funding is being used is making a positive difference.
- The school has an accurate view of its own performance. Plans made are very effective because they are contributed to by everyone and reflect the clear vision specified by the governing body.
- The plans made for students as they progress through school are at exactly the right level and usefulness. They are well organised and capitalise on an increasing number of learning experiences out in the community and in partner schools and colleges. They are enriched by many after school activities and visits and visitors.

- Social moral and spiritual and cultural development is outstanding because work with international partners makes a very significant contribution to the work of the school. During the inspection three visitors from a partner establishment in Bulgaria observed the work of the school and shared expertise.
- The local authority recognises the outstanding work done by the school and supports the school well through an adviser who knows the school well. She works with the school in the evaluation of student progress data that it collects and how it is used to inform priorities for school improvement.
- Supporting parents and including them in the life of the school is seen as a priority and there are many activities in place to involve them. However, some parents expressed a wish for more contact through the use of the school's web-site or other internet methods. The current web site is as yet underdeveloped and as such does not communicate fully to parents the excellent work of the school or promote their involvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good knowledge of what is happening in school and know that this is an outstanding school because members understand, and ask probing questions about, the school data on the performance of students. They seek answers to their questions when they visit the school and see for themselves what is happening following presentations to the governing body by leaders of subjects. Governors manage the budget effectively and are clear about how the pupil premium is being spent. They can identify the positive effect that this is having on those students who are eligible for these additional funds. Governors are fully included in feedback on how well teachers are performing and know about the quality of teaching. The Chair of the Governing Body particularly ensures the management of the performance of the headteacher has an exceptional effect on school improvement. For example she has selected a new professional to advise governors about how to best manage performance in the future in order to ensure that the process has even more impact on school improvement.

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	110946
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401161

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community Special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Ward
Headteacher	Kim Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
Telephone number	01480 377403
Fax number	01480 377405
Email address	office@springcommon.cambs.sch.uk

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