

Princes School

Selborne Street, Liverpool, Merseyside, L8 1YQ

Inspection dates 13–14 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outstanding teaching results in pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils make particularly rapid progress in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have an excellent knowledge of what pupils know and can do. Staff use this information to ensure that the work they give to pupils exactly meets their needs and challenges them to do even better.
- Many pupils make better than expected progress and all groups of pupils do very well, irrespective of their particular special educational needs.
- The vast majority of pupils behave exceptionally well and are very eager to learn. Pupils are confident and happy and show that they feel very safe.
- However, there are a few occasions when the behaviour of a small minority with particular special educational needs slows their learning and that of other pupils. Although behaviour is usually managed very well, for these pupils the school's approaches do not always work.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have an exact knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have taken concerted and highly effective actions since the last inspection to improve teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, these are now outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons both on the school site and at the primary school where two classes are based. There were some joint observations with senior leaders.
- The inspectors took account of 16 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of written comments from a small number of parents.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers and support staff. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data on pupils' progress, evidence of the checks made on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and reports to the governing body.

Inspection team

Liz Godman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Princes School is a large primary special school which caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties. About half of the pupils have autistic spectrum conditions and a smaller number has profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They attend the school from across the City of Liverpool.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- There are about four times as many boys as girls on the school's roll.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There are two classes of older pupils based at Smithdown Primary School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' behaviour from good to outstanding by:
 - checking in greater depth the effects of the approaches used to improve the behaviour of individual pupils
 - adjusting these approaches where necessary to ensure that they are successful.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points when they join the school. The school's data show that a high proportion makes better than expected progress in all the areas of the curriculum and particularly in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- There are no major variations in the achievement and progress of boys and girls, of pupils from different ethnic groups or of pupils with different special educational needs.
- However, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties do especially well in communication and in the way in which they respond in lessons. For example, they eagerly anticipated events in the Nativity story and explored closely different lights and musical instruments.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium progress as well as, and often better than, other pupils. This is the result of carefully planned expenditure ensuring that work is very closely matched to the needs of individuals and early reading skills are developed very well.
- Many pupils are making rapid progress in their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. Some are able to use their skills very well to match words, to write simple words or to try other more complex spellings.
- Other pupils show great enjoyment in tracing letters in the air or in drawing their fingers through sand or foam. For some of these pupils, their preparedness to do this and to co-operate with an adult represents considerable progress.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is also outstanding. Some are learning to count and to recognise numbers, while others trace and draw numbers with support from a teaching assistant.
- The school's data confirm pupils' exceptional progress in independence and social skills. At snack times, younger pupils choose a drink and hand around a biscuit tin, taking turns and saying or signing 'thank you'. In a swimming lesson, older pupils showed independence in the water, often playing well with one another and with adults and in helping the life guard to tidy up.
- Pupils who attend the Smithdown Primary School classes also make outstanding progress. In particular, they benefit from joint activities with the primary school pupils. These activities promote independence and personal development very well.
- More-able pupils are involved in setting targets in their individual education plans. Pupils have also contributed to the development of the 'underwater room' explaining to the volunteers who worked on it what they wanted. These examples illustrate pupils' excellent preparation for the next stage of their education.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching ensures pupils' outstanding progress and achievement. Teachers and teaching assistants have an excellent knowledge of the pupils' skills and use this to plan the next steps in their learning. Consequently, activities are very precisely matched to the needs of each and every pupil.
- Lessons are planned very carefully to sustain pupils' interest and to ensure that each pupil makes the best possible progress.
- All staff have high expectations of the pupils, including a highly positive approach to the teaching of reading and writing. This ensures that more-able pupils are challenged to recognise and write new letters and words, while others have time to practise more familiar letters.
- The school makes excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop pupils' reading and communication skills. At the start of sessions, pupils use a touch screen to register their presence. This is very carefully organised by the teachers, so that some pupils point to a picture of themselves, others point to their name from a choice of two and others select their name from six starting with the same letter.

- Teachers provide good quality materials to aid pupils' learning. For example, in one lesson, pupils cleaned giant model teeth as a step towards brushing their own teeth correctly, while in a swimming lesson, a teaching assistant helped a pupil with visual difficulties to track and identify different balls.
- Excellent use is made of the pupil premium so that pupils known to be eligible receive extra support to meet their needs and to broaden their experiences through music, residential experiences, sports and ICT.
- The teaching of the school's pupils at Smithdown Primary School is also very effective and is maintained at a high standard by regular daily contact between the staff on both sites.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Almost all pupils are very eager to learn and take a full part in lessons and activities. They respond to requests from adults very positively. For example, younger pupils recognise the 'tidying up' music, put things away and come together promptly to share their work.
- Adults provide strong models, take excellent care of the pupils and relate to them sensitively. Consequently, relationships are very good.
- Pupils are keen to come to school and feel very safe. Parents, who completed the questionnaire or who wrote to the inspection team, confirm this.
- There is no evidence of bullying or intentionally aggressive behaviour.
- Many pupils are confident and approach adults to share a book, show their work or to engage them in play. Pupils often take very good care of one another, for example, checking that others are happy or helping them with their coats at the start of the day.
- Many pupils with autistic spectrum conditions sustain their attention very well and work hard to earn points and to choose a favourite activity.
- However, a very small number of pupils displays extreme behavioural difficulties linked to their special educational needs. Occasionally this interrupts their learning and that of others. In general, adults manage this behaviour very effectively so that learning is quickly resumed.
- This works best for pupils who have joined the school in the Reception class or at Key Stage 1, but is sometimes less effective for pupils who have joined the school at a later stage. Although the school provides highly specialised and structured help to improve the behaviour of these pupils, it often proves harder to change previously established habits and patterns of behaviour.
- The school has recognised this and is starting to introduce increasingly rigorous checks on pupils' behaviour over time. This is to establish which approaches are most effective for individual pupils and to ensure that these continue to work in the longer term, so that adjustments can be made where necessary.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Senior leaders and the governing body have a highly accurate view of the school's work. This information is used very well to make continued and sustained improvements to teaching and to pupils' achievement, so that these are outstanding.
- For example, at the previous inspection, the assessment of pupils' work and checks on the quality of teaching, were identified as areas for improvement. Since then, senior and subject leaders have introduced careful checks on teaching and on pupils' progress. As a result, the school's practice is now exemplary in this respect and ensures that all groups of pupils make equally outstanding progress.
- Strong partnerships with similar schools confirm the accuracy of assessment and ensure that effective approaches to teaching are shared more widely.
- All members of the school staff are well-informed about the school's work and are eager to make

a contribution. Consequently, teachers and teaching assistants work closely together, sharing the same high expectations to the benefit of the pupils.

- Training, closely linked to the school's priorities, ensures that all staff gain skills in meeting pupils' different and complex special educational needs.
- The school has developed its own outstanding curriculum. This is carefully designed to meet pupils' different needs. It includes an excellent blend of communication, reading, writing and mathematics, with opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills and to have experiences of the wider world. The school constantly reviews and adjusts the curriculum as necessary.
- The curriculum is enriched by art, music and sport. Particular events, for example, the Chinese New Year, enable pupils to experience and celebrate their own and other cultures.
- The school works closely with parents and does all it can to keep them informed about their child's progress, for example, through the link books and the active parents' forum. All parents who completed the questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Staff are well-trained and vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are very secure and meet requirements.
- The local authority provides good support to the school, particularly in verifying the accuracy of its own evaluation of its work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of the work of the school, based on regular and detailed reports from the headteacher and from visits to school. The governing body takes difficult decisions, so that teachers' promotions and pay relate directly to the effectiveness of their work, based on wide-ranging evidence. The governing body keeps a close check on the school's finances, always considering the effects of any expenditure on pupils' learning. This ensures that the pupil premium has been spent wisely, so that most pupils known to be eligible are making better than expected progress.

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	104750
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400734

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hawkins
Headteacher	Kathy Brent
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
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