

Exhall Grange Specialist School and Science College

Easter Way, Ash Green, Coventry, CV7 9HP

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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

- Secondary students in Years 8 to 11 do not always make good progress in mathematics. The school has had staffing difficulties in the subject.
- The quality of teaching is not always good. This is particularly so in the teaching of mathematics in Years 8 to 11, where too often the work is either too easy for some or too difficult for others.
- The new programme to plan out what students in these years should learn has not yet been completed.
- At times in some other lessons the pace of learning is slow.
- The marking of students' work does not always praise what they can do and tell them how to improve.
- Although leaders and managers, including the governors, have recognised that mathematics needs improving they have not been successful in doing it.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well and help make the school very welcoming and safe.
- The students' council plays an important role in ensuring that students feel important members of the school community.
- The very youngest children in the school make an excellent start to their school lives and those in the primary department make good progress.
- The sixth form is good. It successfully prepares almost all students to move on to college or, in a few cases, university.
- The school gives excellent support to students with visual impairments, so their progress in reading and writing in Braille is excellent.
- Students develop a very good understanding of how people throughout the world live their lives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 22 lessons. Four of these observations were jointly undertaken with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors checked on the behaviour of students in lessons and at break and lunch times.
- The inspectors held meetings with members of staff and met with student representatives of the school council. Meetings were also held with two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors listened to some students read, and looked at students' work, teachers' lesson plans and achievement reports showing students' progress.
- School policies were sampled and the minutes of recent governing body meetings reviewed.
- 22 comments from parents on the online Parent View survey were considered, alongside the views of two parents who contacted the inspectors via email.

Inspection team

Charles Hackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school takes students with a wide range of disabilities and special educational needs. The school was originally a school for students with visual impairment. It now takes students with complex medical needs, physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Of the current population almost half are on the autistic spectrum.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium (additional money provided to the school by the government) is close to the national average.
- A below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A small number of students are admitted directly into the sixth form from other special schools.
- Primary students are shared with a local primary school – they are on the register for both schools.
- The school is managing the local authorities support service for visually impaired students in other schools and pre-school settings.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the current academic year improve the quality of teaching by:
 - sharing the qualities that makes some of the teaching in the school outstanding with all other teachers
 - ensuring that lessons always proceed at a good pace
 - making sure that the marking of students' work is always up to date and helps them know how well they have achieved and what they should do to improve further.
- Over the current academic year ensure that senior staff take effective action to enable students in Years 8 to 11 to make at least good progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the work set in lessons provides good assistance for those who find mathematics difficult, as well as stretching the more able to achieve high standards
 - providing effective programmes that detail what students will learn as they move through the secondary department
 - helping teachers work together to improve students' numeracy skills, for example by making sure they are practised in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' progress in mathematics requires improvement because it slows in Years 8 to 11. As a result by the time they reach school leaving age, a significant proportion do not achieve their expected grades in examinations such as GCSE.
- In mathematics lessons for these year groups, too often students fail to make good progress. A scrutiny of the work in some of their books shows many complete pages of the same 'sums' without sufficient attention being given to providing work that is at the right level for each individual student.
- The progress of students in a few other lessons, more so in the secondary department, is sometimes less than good. Progress is at times restricted because students are not being encouraged to work and learn at a good pace. Students sometimes do not make the progress they could because marking fails to make it clear what they need to do to improve.
- Progress for the youngest children in the school (Early Years Foundation Stage) is outstanding. The very detailed assessments made of their progress from when they started show how well they do in each aspect of their development, especially in communicating with others.
- Sixth form students make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Last year a small number gained A and A* grades in 'A' level examinations, whilst others increased their ability to be independent through improving their reading, writing and number skills and achieving success in practical courses.
- Primary students make good progress, and this year the progress of both groups of students in Year 7 is at least good. These students show real enjoyment in their learning and are making very good progress at developing their thinking skills.
- Students with visual impairment often make exceptional progress in reading and writing in Braille. For example, in a Year 6 lesson students with visual impairment were fully involved in individual and group activities because of their excellent use of Braille to read questions on a worksheet, write answers to questions or join in a group reading exercise.
- The school has improved the range of information it has on students' achievements. Its analysis of this shows that apart from the few with visual impairment, the other different groups of students that the school supports, all achieve to a similar standard.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching of mathematics for students in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 requires improvement before it can lead to good progress. Students are sometimes given similar worksheet activities that are either too hard or too easy for some of them.
- Teaching in the secondary part of the school does not always ensure that students are working and learning at a good pace in the lessons. At times when the higher ability students have completed their set work they are not stretched by additional tasks to extend their learning even further.

- The marking of students' work is not always of assistance to students, and is not always up to date. Some marking is helpful and recognises students' efforts, but some is of no assistance to students in telling them what they need to do to improve.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in the school. In a science lesson for Year 11 students the teaching very effectively challenged students to understand the composition of air and the characteristics of different chemicals. School records show that the teaching of physical education is often judged to be outstanding. However, opportunities for teachers whose work requires improvement to learn from outstanding practice in the school have not been fully exploited.
- In the primary part of the school, teachers promote students' reading, writing and number skills very well when they teach other subjects. Reading and writing skills are well supported in other subjects in the secondary part but the support to improve numeracy skills is not as evident.
- The teaching of the youngest children in the school is outstanding. Teachers and their assistants are very effective in using specialist approaches to engage the children in practical activities and successfully encourage them to communicate with each other and staff.
- Teaching in the sixth form is well focussed on the individual needs of students. Staff help students to be as independent as possible, and are very effective at supporting students in finding appropriate placements when they leave the school.
- The teaching of students with visual impairment is excellent. Teachers are very well trained for this and make very good use of specialist skills. This ensures these students play a full and active part in the life of the school community.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students show excellent attitudes to learning in almost all lessons. They often demonstrate real enjoyment in undertaking their work. Even when the pace of learning drops they usually respond in a positive manner to staff and each other.
- In the very best lessons students show outstanding ability to co-operate with each other. This was seen in two lessons for Year 7 groups, where students worked with a partner to make short animated films using tablet computers. The level of support they provided for each other was exceptional and resulted in very well made film clips.
- Students contribute greatly to the positive and welcoming environment in the school. They gain in confidence, improve their social skills and boost their self-esteem through being valued members of the school community.
- Students follow the expectations of the school and often move around the site without the need for staff to control their behaviour, for example at break times.
- Bullying is not a serious problem in the school. Incidents that may be construed as bullying are very rare and dealt with effectively by staff. Staff help students to understand what bullying, including cyber bullying, is and how it can be prevented.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour do occur occasionally. The severity of a very few result in students involved being given short fixed term exclusions, but there have been no permanent

exclusions. The school deals well with students who have challenging behaviour and can show evidence of improvement for individuals involved.

- Staff carefully consider students' views. The school council plays a prominent role in the school and its student representatives take their responsibilities very seriously. Ideas put forward are reviewed by staff and where appropriate, such as improvements to the games room, changes are agreed.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior staff have not been able to ensure that the teaching of mathematics in Years 8 through to 11 is good. Since the last inspection they have faced staffing issues that have affected teaching and students' achievement in this subject. Solutions to resolve these weaknesses have been affected by staffing difficulties and have not yet proved to be effective.
- Progress in mathematics has not improved because planning to show how the different aspects of mathematics will be taught has not been completed, even though it is part of the improvement action plan. Teachers are not working effectively together to bring about good progress in mathematics for students in Years 8 to 11. Good mathematics resources are not always available to teachers when needed.
- Nevertheless the wider school development plan is good and as a result much has been achieved. The plan is based on the results of a rigorous process of self-evaluation, and staff and governors have had good opportunities to contribute towards it.
- The checking and supporting of the performance of staff has brought about some improvements. Through good support and training opportunities some individual teachers, whose lessons previously have been judged to be less than good, have improved to be now consistently judged as good.
- Recent changes to the management structure in the school have added increased rigour to the checking of students' achievements. Appropriately this has included ensuring that teachers paid on the highest salary levels take on increased responsibilities for aspects of the school's work.
- The senior team and the governing body share high ambitions for the school. This is reflected in the outstanding achievement and teaching of the youngest children and those with visual impairment, the good education primary and sixth form students receive and the excellent teaching and learning in science and physical education throughout the school.
- Much has been done to extend the activities and courses students can follow. This has been particularly effective in the sixth form, where the number of work-related training opportunities has been increased. Additionally those students identified as being 'gifted and talented', have been very well supported to achieve very well in 'A' levels.
- Links with a local primary school are very beneficial. Students enjoy the opportunities to mix with mainstream students and this does much to support their social and cultural development. The school puts a very strong focus on helping students to understand how people in different parts of the world live in different ways, for example through well-established links to a school in Jerusalem.
- Good attention has been given to establishing effective child protection procedures and working well with other agencies. The school plays an important part in supporting the local authority in

addressing the needs of students with visual impairment in other schools.

- The financial management of the school is secure. Students allocated additional money as part of the pupil premium have been given positive additional support. For example, additional staff have been employed to provide these students with one to one help. This has ensured their achievements are similar to other students in the school.
- The local authority provides the school with good support. It has proved particularly helpful in improving the collation and analysis of data on students' achievements.
- The governance of the school:
 - The governing body shares the same desire as senior staff for the school to be as effective as possible. It makes very good use of the professional skills of its members to check on how well the school is performing, including ensuring that safety is given a high priority. It has taken advantage of good training opportunities available within the local authority. Financial control is stringent and governors ensure staff are rewarded by pay rises or promotion in accordance with the quality of their work. Governors have been made aware of the staffing issues affecting the teaching and learning of mathematics but have not been able to make progress in ensuring these issues have been successfully addressed.

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	125794
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	408919

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Earl
Headteacher	Christine Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
Telephone number	024 7636 4200
Fax number	024 7664 5055
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