

Northcott School

Dulverston Close, Bransholme, Hull, HU7 4EL

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils achieve well. They often make particularly good progress in learning to communicate. This means, for example, that some pupils move from the autistic provision to the main part of the school.
- Pupils make better progress in English than at the time of the last inspection. Leaders made some important decisions about how reading and writing are taught and all the teachers worked to improve pupils' achievement in the subject.
- Teachers know a great deal about the subjects they teach and about how each pupil is achieving. They encourage pupils to do as much for themselves as they can.
- Students in Key Stage 4 are prepared well for leaving school. After Year 11 they go on to various colleges and know that to do this they must do well at school.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They try hard in lessons and behave well. Bullying is unusual and pupils say that when there are any incidents they are dealt with quickly by the school.
- Leaders and governors have made sure that there have been a range of improvements since the last inspection. They are determined that the school will continue to improve and know just what needs to be done to achieve this.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. Work is sometimes too hard or too easy for particular pupils. In some lessons, the best use is not made of the skills of teaching assistants.
- Progress in mathematics is not as fast as it is in English. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise using their mathematics skills during lessons in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons. Two of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with groups of governors, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were looked at as were the results from the school's own most recent survey of parents' views.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including information about pupils' progress, samples of their work, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding policies and records and the school's plans for its future improvement.

Inspection team

Rosemary Eaton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northcott caters for pupils with speech and language and communication and interaction difficulties. Pupils have moderate learning difficulties and many have additional needs including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, visual impairment and autism. The complexity of pupils' needs has increased since the previous inspection.
- All pupils have a statement in respect of their special educational needs.
- The school has an autistic provision in three separate classes for pupils with extreme behaviour and communication needs linked to their autism.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school is accredited by the National Autistic Society and has specialist status in communication and interaction.
- An outreach service managed by the school provides support to pupils with autism in mainstream schools in Hull.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good and most is outstanding by making sure that:
 - work in all lessons is matched closely to what different pupils need to learn next
 - the expertise of teaching assistants is used to the full to promote learning.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics so it is at least as fast as that in English. Focus particularly on providing more opportunities for pupils to use mathematics skills during lessons in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Different groups of pupils all make good progress from their starting points. Less-able pupils and those with particularly complex needs move forward in very small steps but their progress is just as good as that of more-able pupils.
- Progress in English tends to be better than that in mathematics and is faster now than at the time of the last inspection.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress in learning to use the sounds made by letters (phonics) to help them read. They learn to recognise many words and so more-able pupils become fluent readers. Very often, pupils' ability to read words is better than their understanding of what the words mean.
- Phonics skills are also used effectively by pupils when spelling. Many of the oldest pupils spell and punctuate their writing accurately.
- Pupils use their reading and writing skills well during lessons in many subjects. They have fewer opportunities to use mathematics skills.
- Pupils' ability to communicate often improves particularly well. Those who do not speak use methods such as exchanging pictures. A number of programmes and courses are used with great success, for example, to improve pupils' ability to communicate in social situations such as when meeting others. As a result, many pupils are confident and happy to take part in discussions and conversations.
- In mathematics, pupils tend to make best progress in topics to do with shapes, space and measures. For example, more-able pupils in Year 9 confidently explained the methods they had used to calculate the area of shapes. Pupils' progress in using their mathematics skills to solve problems is typically slower.
- By the end of Year 11, all pupils have gained certificates to show their success in varied subjects, always including English and mathematics. A minority of pupils pass GCSE examinations, for example, in art, science and mathematics.
- Pupils attending the autistic provision often make remarkable progress when their particular disabilities and special educational needs are considered. Their needs are met so well that they are able to concentrate on their tasks. They gradually develop skills and self-control that enable some pupils to attend lessons in the main school and eventually to leave the autistic provision.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make the same good progress as other pupils with similar starting points. Last year, the school used some of the extra funds to purchase a computer program which has successfully helped pupils develop their reading skills. Laptop computers are loaned to pupils with no computer at home so they are not disadvantaged.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers often specialise in teaching particular subjects or age groups or working in the autistic provision. This enables them to develop and use their expertise to the full. In Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching in English and mathematics has improved because teachers specialise and no longer teach both subjects to their tutor groups.
- Teachers use their knowledge to plan activities that capture pupils' interest and help them to learn. Equipment and materials are chosen equally carefully. A reading game played in an autistic provision class strengthened pupils' knowledge of phonics and information and communication technology, also their ability to take turns and consider others.
- Teachers collect detailed information about what each pupil knows, understands and can do. They often make excellent use of this when planning lessons, so each pupil's needs are met. In an English lesson for Year 9 pupils, the newspaper articles they read were varied and so were the written tasks that followed. This meant that each pupil had work set at just the right level of

difficulty and as a result they all made outstanding progress.

- However, sometimes teachers do not take enough account of pupils' differing needs. This can mean, for example, that work is too hard for some and too easy for others.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to do as much for themselves as they can. For example, when pupils ask how to spell a particular word, staff insist that they first 'have a go'. Pupils are reminded to think about the letters that represent the sounds they hear as the word is spoken.
- Teaching assistants usually make good contributions to lessons but occasionally their expertise is not used well enough. This happens when they do not know what pupils are to learn or they do not have clear enough guidance about their own responsibilities.
- Whatever the subject, teachers frequently expect pupils to use their communication, reading and writing skills to help them learn. There are far fewer chances provided for them to practise mathematics skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils arrive at lessons ready to work. They usually show great interest in their lessons and are keen to learn. Many volunteer to answer questions and more-able pupils in particular need little encouragement to concentrate on their work. In the autistic provision, pupils learn to follow routines and move from one task to the next without prompting.
- Older students complete examination courses, persevering with demanding work. They know that they need to do well at school in order to go on to college or training after school.
- Most pupils behave very well in lessons, around school and at playtime. They describe the school as 'friendly and peaceful'.
- Owing to their disabilities and special educational needs, a minority of pupils find it hard to control their emotions and impulses. As a result, it is not unusual for these pupils to be aggressive or to refuse to follow instructions. The behaviour of most pupils improves during their time at school, enabling all of them to take part in work experience, for example.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, for example, bullying using technology such as computers and mobile phones. They say that bullying is not a problem at this school and that staff quickly follow up any concerns that are reported.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say that one reason for this is that staff are approachable: 'If you have a worry you can talk to them'.
- The school makes sure that pupils know how they can keep themselves safe. They learn about road safety and to be wary of strangers, for example. Additionally, pupils say that lessons about drug abuse, sex and relationships are of great value because 'they give you advice about life'.
- One outcome of their good behaviour and awareness of staying safe is that with parental permission, students in Years 10 and 11 can leave the school site at lunchtimes. They know that this privilege can be withdrawn if they do not live up to the school's expectations.
- Attendance is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher makes sure that staff share her ambitions for the school, for example, by enabling them to play a part in deciding priorities for the year ahead.
- Systems to manage the performance of teachers are well organised. The information collected about how individuals are performing helps leaders to build up a picture of teaching across the school. Additionally, the deputy headteacher tracks pupils' progress meticulously.
- Leaders use their accurate knowledge of teaching and achievement to pinpoint where staff training is needed and when deciding school priorities. One result of this work is that teaching and achievement in English have improved since the previous inspection.
- The most skilled teachers are given additional responsibilities and are rewarded by higher

salaries.

- The bulk of the checks made on the quality of teaching are undertaken by the headteacher and the assistant headteacher. However, other leaders such as those overseeing English and mathematics are developing their skills. They are taking on more responsibility for finding out about how well their subjects are taught and planning for improvements.
- The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection. For example, the learning of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 is now linked together by topics and meets their needs better.
- Staff work hard to provide all pupils with equal opportunities. The special arrangements made for pupils who are particularly able in certain subjects are a good example of this. The school's strong links with a secondary school and several colleges enable these opportunities to occur.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged in many ways. For example, pupils know that surplus equipment has been donated to help less fortunate pupils in Romania.
- The school works very closely with parents. It seeks their views annually and offers support and courses that enable parents to assist their children to learn when at home.
- The school's work with pupils with autism in other schools is regarded highly by the local authority and helps to enable these pupils to be educated in mainstream schools.
- The local authority provides support with a light touch because it has no concerns about the school. It responds to requests for advice about any school matters.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are led by an experienced and knowledgeable Chair. They help to ensure that the school meets its duty to safeguard pupils. Governors receive details of how well the school is performing and the Chair looks at the information collected about pupils' achievement. Governors are aware that teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. They appreciate the links between teachers' performance, pay and responsibilities. They know that where teachers' work should be better they are given support, with checks made to ensure there is 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	118138
Local authority	Kingston upon Hull City of
Inspection number	401726

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin I'Anson
Headteacher	Gill Volans
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2009
Telephone number	01482 825311
Fax number	01482 822253
Email address	admin@northcott.hull.sch.uk

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