

Morecambe Road School

Morecambe Road, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA3 3AB

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and his team lead and manage the school well. With good support from the governing body, they are successfully improving teaching and pupils' achievement and all areas are of consistently good or outstanding quality.
- Throughout the school teaching is consistently good. Upon admission to the school, pupils' skills are carefully checked and staff plan well designed individual programmes for each pupil. These work well and ensure that pupils' of all ages make good progress.
- Pupils make outstanding improvements in their behaviour, attendance and personal skills. Staff know pupils well and have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and safety. Pupils feel safe and enjoy all aspects of school life.
- Parents, pupils and staff are rightly proud of their school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some of the more-able pupils do not make as much progress as they should in the secondary school. Targets set by the school for their progress are not high enough.
- Teachers do not always expect enough progress of the more-able pupils in lessons in the secondary school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons by 16 different teachers, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and teaching assistants and a representative of the local authority. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Telephone discussions were held with a senior representative from Lancaster and Morecambe College and the headteacher from Wennington Hall School who each provide off-site courses for pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and of 45 questionnaires completed by staff. Additionally, inspectors read three letters written by parents which were handed in to the inspection team.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance, improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

John Coleman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jim Bennetts

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides exclusively for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Around half of pupils have moderate learning difficulties (MLD). Approximately 40% of pupils are assessed as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). About one in ten pupils has behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Many pupils have complex multiple needs.
- Three-quarters of the pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the local authority, is much higher than the national average.
- Over 95% of pupils are White British and almost all pupils speak English as their first language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of pupils, especially those who are more-able in the secondary school by:
 - raising the expectations of teachers for the amount of progress to be made by the more-able pupils in each lesson
 - increasing the targets set for the more-able pupils' progress
 - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All pupils enter the school with very low standards. For some pupils this is often after periods in mainstream schools during which they have underachieved. As a result, the vast majority of pupils arrive with large gaps in their learning and poor social skills. Almost all have restricted thinking ability.
- Due to consistently good teaching in recent years, pupils make good progress, especially in learning language, communication and literacy skills. By the end of Year 11, all pupils gain some external accreditations, including GCSE Art and Design, together with entry level qualifications in English and mathematics. A small number of pupils achieve the lower grades in GCSE English or mathematics. All pupils successfully move on to post-16 education, training or employment. Taken overall, this represents good achievement.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children get off to a good start. The focus on thinking, physical and social development helps children to quickly become more self-confident and independent. Rapid improvements in children's behaviour mean that they learn quickly. In particular, children make good gains in learning letters and sounds, counting numbers and in the development of speaking and listening skills.
- In the primary school, pupils thrive due to the outstanding way in which staff attend to their very specific special educational needs. Carefully targeted work leads to pupils enjoying success, receiving much praise and making good progress. They improve their reading skills through good teaching and effective support from specialist staff such as speech and language therapists.
- For pupils who have very low educational standards the school sets high targets and teachers expect the very best from pupils. In lessons, this is seen in the way all staff guide and support pupils to work hard and improve. Consequently, this group of pupils, especially in the primary school, makes good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- In the secondary school, pupils continue to improve their basic skills in reading, speaking and listening and in mathematics. Staff skilfully take every opportunity to teach these skills in each subject of the curriculum. For example, in a mathematics lesson about addition, pupils in a Year 7 class were reminded by the teacher of the correct end sound for the letter `s` in the mathematical term `equals`.
- Pupils do well in learning computer skills. Teachers use computers widely to make lessons interesting and to teach pupils extra communication skills such as using the internet, exploring search engines and basic word processing. This prepares pupils well for later life and education.
- A small minority of pupils in the secondary school who reach higher standards make progress that is not as good as other pupils. This is because not enough is expected by teachers in some lessons and long-term targets for pupils' progress are too easy. This group of pupils consistently reach the school's targets but these are not high enough.
- All pupils in Key Stage 4 attend at least one course at a local college. A small number of pupils attend a local school to complete a hair and beauty course. As well as helping pupils to gain different qualifications, the placements have a very positive effect on their general attitude to learning, and their social skills. The programmes are well planned, matched to individual pupils' interests and progress is checked by the school's staff.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make similar progress to all other pupils and the standards they reach as measured by their average point scores in English and mathematics, are also equally comparable.
- The school manages the achievement of pupils whose circumstances may put them at risk with great care. Pupils of all special educational needs groups represented in the school, boys and girls, pupils' eligible for free school meals and those with physical impairments or disabilities make similarly good progress. The notable success of all these groups of pupils is testament to the school's belief in and commitment to equal opportunities.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching in recent years is usually good. The school's records show, that since the previous inspection teaching has improved with few lessons requiring improvement, most being good and a small proportion which is outstanding. Observations during this inspection confirm this good profile of teaching. As a result, pupils' achieve well.
- Teachers and support staff are thoroughly well prepared for each lesson. Very good teamwork is a feature of every lesson. Everyone knows each pupil's needs well and the quality of guidance and support for individual pupils is excellent.
- Good use of the school's behaviour policy by all staff leads to minimal or no disruption to lessons. First class relationships between staff and pupils mean that lessons take place in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and enjoyment. Pupils are confident to ask questions and seek help if they need and staff are extremely responsive in return.
- Lessons are structured well and take account of pupils' test results so that the work set for most is good. Teachers and support staff are skilled at matching the teaching approach to pupils' aptitudes and interests. For example, pupils who enjoy demonstrating their skills, such as using a computer mouse, are given regular opportunities to show the class. Other pupils, who prefer to stay in the background, are supported quietly in a smaller group or by themselves.
- Teachers constantly stretch pupils' speech and language skills. In all subjects, key words are emphasised and repeated often until they are learnt. Effective training has been provided to improve the skills of all staff in teaching letters and sounds. As a result, staff provide good demonstrations for pupils to imitate.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage teaching is good. Lessons are organised so that children learn basic reading and writing skills by copying the sounds and shapes made by the staff, who are skilled at explaining new things.
- Extra support and intervention provided by speech and language specialists, child psychologists and health professionals, are well managed. Pupils make good improvement as a result.
- Teaching gets the best out of pupils in most lessons. Pupils show good concentration and interest. In the outstanding lessons, typical features include regular checks on pupils' progress and rapid acceleration to the next step to learn. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson about the rainforest, the teacher used a computer screen to show some vivid images, asked searching questions of the pupils and moved the pupils swiftly on to their own research on the internet.
- For the most part, staff set work which is based upon the latest test results. School tracking records show that, in the main, this is used well. For the pupils who reach higher standards, targets are sometimes too low and this leads to lessons in which a small minority of pupils are not always stretched quickly or far enough especially in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Teaching makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to talk to and learn from each other. Assemblies include themes about health and moral issues. Religious education teaches pupils about other faiths and religions.
- The school organises many trips to places of interest which helps pupils develop their skills and capability and prepares them to live in a diverse society. Pupils told inspectors about the wonderful outdoor trips which they enjoy enormously.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Staff questionnaires and discussions, together with the views of parents and pupils show that this is typical of each school day. Pupils are polite, welcoming and cooperative, with each other and with staff and visitors. Given their starting points, this demonstrates remarkable improvement for many pupils.
- School records show that in recent years pupils' attendance has made significant improvement and the number of pupil exclusions has dwindled to none. Incident books show commendable

reductions in the number and frequency of behaviour incidents over time. Such improvements are directly attributable to the speed of response made by staff to reduce any potentially troublesome moments with sensitivity and confidence. Pupils told inspectors that there is little or no bullying and that staff deal with any minor incidents quickly and efficiently.

- Pupils show pride in their school. Photographs abound in the corridors and classrooms of smiling faces on top of mountains or playing a wide range of sports. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and older pupils alike are happy coming to school. One parent who wrote to the inspection team sums up the feelings of many, 'In a mainstream school my daughter was highly stressed, upset and did not want to go to school. (At Morecambe Road) she gets out of the taxi with big smiles on her every day and says she loves her school. For a child who does not communicate her feelings very well or often, this is truly remarkable as is the transformation we have seen in her.'
- Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, due to the high expectations of the staff, make an excellent contribution to their progress in learning new skills and knowledge. The school's systems and policies for behaviour are understood by all pupils and they appreciate the clear boundaries and regular rewards which motivate their improvement.
- Staff complete good checks to keep pupils safe, provide vigilant supervision and show a very caring attitude towards pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and say they are well looked after. Staff are well trained for first aid, manual handling, restraint procedures and child protection requirements.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear view and leads the school staff superbly. He is rightly well thought of by pupils, parents and the governing body. He has built a strong senior team who in turn have given middle leaders confidence to take increasing responsibility for areas of the school. Teaching assistants work very closely with teachers and there are strong staff teams in every class.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved pupils' behaviour, increased rates of pupils' attendance and extended the choice of courses in Key Stage 4. There was a prompt response to the areas identified for improvement from the previous inspection which resulted in classes and groups being organised by pupils' ability, and, staff training to improve the teaching of communication skills. Combined with other effective staff training, this has helped to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' make good progress including in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievements are tracked regularly and these inform the annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs. These reviews are well managed, involve parents, pupils and external agencies. Individual plans are drawn up to target the main areas for pupils to improve. Teachers use these well to plan activities in lessons. However, the targets set by senior leaders for the progress of the pupils who reach the higher standards are not high enough.
- The quality of teaching is checked closely and forms part of a rigorous process for the performance management of staff. Salary progression is directly linked to the accurate view of teaching performance. The governing body is well informed and makes careful financial arrangements to reward performance. Only good and better performance is rewarded.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. A school adviser is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and he expects school leaders to improve the school. Local authority external agency support such as child psychologists and speech and language therapists also provide a good service to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective, proud of the school and ambitious for improvement. The Chair of the Governing Body understands the school well. Statutory responsibilities are met included those for safeguarding pupils. Policies and procedures are suitably in place and staff

training is to the required level and up to date. Performance management arrangements for all staff, including the headteacher, are rigorous, fair and link clearly to salary progression. The governing body utilises the pupil premium funding effectively; monies are used to provide subsidy to trips, breakfast and after school activities, specialist staff and life skills workshops. Work experience is also provided. As a result, all pupils take part in all activities and the progress of all groups of pupils is equal.

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	119876
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401879

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Ward
Headteacher	Paul Edmondson
Date of previous school inspection	21 April 2010
Telephone number	01524 414384
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