

# North Ridge Community School

Tenter Balk Lane, Adwick-le-Street, Woodlands, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 7EF

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they are taught well.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in communication and in developing their independence.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It enables students to gain excellent life-and-work-related skills, and an extensive range of vocational qualifications.
- The interim professional leadership of the school is outstanding, ensuring all pupils continue to achieve well and that the quality of teaching is good. The behaviour and safety of pupils is good because pupils are provided with a dedicated staff who are all well trained in a wide range of techniques and with high quality resources.
- The school is improving and governors are steering it expertly through exceptionally challenging circumstances.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons teachers do not use enough strategies to move the most-able pupils on quickly enough in their learning.
- The instability in its professional leadership is holding back long-term development planning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by 11 teachers and two other staff members.
- Four lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors talked to pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes, and listened to some of them read.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the school’s external consultant.
- The inspectors looked at a random sample of case studies detailing pupils’ education and care plans, assessment information, the school’s plans for improvement and its monitoring information.
- They examined a range of documentation including safeguarding policies and records relating to the work of the governing body. The lead inspector analysed 49 staff questionnaires.
- There were 33 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with three letters sent to the school marked for the attention of the inspection team. Inspectors also spoke to some parents.

## Inspection team

Henry Moreton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jim Alexander

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is designated as an all-age special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those whose parents are in the armed forces.
- Most pupils are White British and none are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school is based in relatively new purpose-built accommodation.
- The school's catchment area encompasses the whole of Doncaster Borough and pupils are transferred from home to school via one of the school mini-buses.
- The headteacher is absent due to ill-health. The deputy headteacher is suspended. An assistant headteacher is suspended.
- An assistant headteacher is acting headteacher. Another assistant headteacher is acting deputy headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes by:
  - ensuring more effective use of questioning to develop learning, especially of the most-able pupils
  - ensuring teachers have a back-up plan to use if things do not go as expected
  - utilising teaching assistants to assess pupils' progress during lessons
  - using homework consistently so that parents have a better understanding of its use.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - securing stability of its professional leadership before the start of the next academic year
  - drawing up plans for the school's longer-term development over a three- to five-year period
  - ensuring leaders have good expertise across all of the five key stages so that they can lead learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils make good progress. Those whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable also make good progress, the result of well targeted support.
- School tracking information shows that all groups of pupils achieve well from their individual starting points.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. As their communication skills develop, they make their needs known. They often use a few words, but more typically gesture or point.
- Sixth-formers develop relevant work-related skills and acquire a wide range of vocational qualifications. They are very well-equipped to cope as independently as possible in adult life. All can shop and cook a meal. Some travel independently.
- The best progress is made in English. All groups of pupils make better-than-expected progress in reading and writing. Many pupils read simple texts and books. The most-able pupils have a good understanding of what they read. Writing ranges from mark making through to the use of simple computer programmes. The most-able pupils produce simple presentations and use computer software to import pictures.
- All groups of pupils make expected progress in mathematics, with some making better than expected progress. The most-able pupils calculate and measure reasonably accurately, and use the correct mathematical language. The most-able pupils use money and work out change, and have a developing awareness of distance and how to use timetables. The less-able pupils have a sound knowledge of number and counting.
- In most lessons, pupils make good progress. In some lessons, pupils' progress is outstanding. In a few lessons, progress for the most-able pupils is slowed because teachers ask undemanding questions. The use of homework to extend and challenge pupils and to help parents to support their children is inconsistent across the school.
- Some of the most-able pupils have opportunities for their learning to be extended by working alongside mainstream pupils, and to use the resources of these schools.
- The pupil premium makes a noticeable impact on raising achievement and securing the well-being of these pupils. This is because it is used to purchase resources and provide time for staff to improve the reading and literacy skills of pupils.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is as good as it is for all other pupils.

### The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of accurate assessment, teachers are aware that progress in English is better than in mathematics and they are working hard to address this.
- Most teaching is good. There is some outstanding teaching, and some that requires improvement. Sixth-formers benefit from an outstanding curriculum which is meticulously tailored to meet the learning needs of individuals.
- Teaching typically enables pupils to make good progress because relationships are strong and pupils have confidence in their teachers and other staff.
- The vast majority of lessons are well managed so that behaviour is good. Lessons have well-established routines so that pupils know what to expect. Teachers ensure that pupils have a means of communicating so that they can all join in with discussions and make choices.
- The advice and training given to teachers are improving the consistency of practice across the school, but further progress is being hampered by the current lack of leadership capacity.
- The pupil-premium funding is used well for training staff to better teach and care for pupils.
- Where lessons are less successful, teachers ask too many closed questions, requiring simple

responses from pupils rather than extending and challenging, especially the most-able. In an otherwise good mathematics lesson, for instance, the teacher asked about shapes and sizes but might have asked, 'Can you find other circles in the classroom?' At other times, activities do not always turn out as expected and the pace slows because teachers do not have something 'up their sleeve' for such eventualities.

- In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge of what pupils can already do to match work well to the next steps in their development. They adapt their lessons speedily when things run out of steam or when, as in a dance lesson, some pupils are self-conscious and the teacher changes to a dance which they are happy to try in front of others. The common strength is that lessons are based on real life and support pupils' independence.
- In all lessons, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They do not over support but expertly steer pupils in improving their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. However, opportunities are missed to use teaching assistants in the ongoing assessment of pupils' progress.
- Communications between the school and parents are good. One parent comments that, 'The welcome we get from reception and staff is lovely.' while another comments, 'I can contact teachers at anytime during and after school hours for advice. They are always there if needed.' Very good use is made of the home-school diaries by all teachers in Key Stages 1 to 4. These are a valuable communication tool, often about health and welfare issues, but there is potential to use them more to help parents understand how they can best support homework.
- In most lessons and also around the school, there is a real sense of fun. In several of the lessons observed by inspectors, the teaching assistants enjoyed themselves as much as the pupils. The atmosphere is vibrant, with pupils spending valuable time out of their classes socialising and developing their life skills. When they begin class-based activities, they do so with interest and enthusiasm for learning. This is because of the outstanding relationships that exist, not only with the staff but also between pupils.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- On entry to school, including to the Early Years Foundation Stage, many pupils' behaviour is challenging because of their frustration at not being able to communicate or do things. This soon improves.
- Behaviour is good overall. Teachers usually manage pupils' challenging behaviours well. They ensure that obstacles to learning are removed. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are seated so that they are not easily distracted. Pupils with hearing or visual impairments are able to enjoy and join in everything on offer because teachers use the appropriate technologies.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous. Inspectors saw several instances of teaching assistants exchanging 'high fives' with pupils, celebrating their achievements, and pupils spontaneously showing their delight when meeting staff. Inspectors were seldom able to move far without pupils shaking hands and engaging in conversation.
- Parents say that their children feel safe. Those pupils with complex difficulties show that they are comfortable with the adults who look after their care needs.
- One parent comments, 'My son goes to school via a bus provided by the school and has a great relationship with the bus escort who is also his support in the classroom.' This use of teaching assistants as escorts is just one example of the school's attention to detail. It means there are good links with parents and pupils feel safe.
- There is no recorded evidence of bullying or racist incidents. Any bad behaviour is stopped speedily and staff are adept at ensuring that pupils reconcile any differences.
- Pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe, including when using computers and other media. As a result of a broad and balanced personal curriculum, they are aware of the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and of stranger danger. The school works well with other agencies to ensure these preventative measures are in place.

- Attendance is average and improving. Often absence is medically related. There have been no exclusions since the school opened in 2009.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The acting headteacher's stewardship over the past months has been exemplary, and in this she is ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher. As a result, morale is high. The school is rightly held in high regard by its community.
- School leaders' assessment of the school's performance is accurate in all respects. This is because pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are checked rigorously.
- The three issues left with the school following its previous inspection have been successfully tackled.
- Training is targeted to improve the skills of the staff, to which they respond well. The developing use of technologies and software programmes enables the school to be run effectively and efficiently. As a result teachers are able to teach well, and pupils are cared for well.
- The interim management structure is effective. Professional leaders are expertly supported by a range of specialist managers who do not have teaching responsibilities.
- As a result of the instability in leadership, insufficient attention has been given to drawing up plans for developments over the longer term.
- The leadership of subjects, including English and mathematics, is developing well. All staff respond flexibly to meet the needs of pupils during this difficult time for the school. The gaps across the key stages due to staff absences are mostly, but not all, covered by leaders with the appropriate age-related expertise.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. Their social and cultural development is outstanding. School leaders ensure that pupils of all abilities benefit from a wide range of life experiences both in and out of school. Older pupils enjoy the residential experience and the choir, as well as visits to theatres and art galleries. Sixth-formers participate in a host of enterprise and work-related activities such as staffing the school cafe. They also benefit from the use of 'Harmony House' which supports their independent-living skills. The most-able pupils benefit from interacting with pupils from mainstream schools.
- Leaders ensure that different groups of pupils receive equal chances to succeed.
- Work with parents is good, although not enough is done to support them in understanding how they can best help their children at home with their school work.
- The school is well supported by its local authority whose officers are providing professional support to governors, including for the ongoing personnel issues. In addition, school leaders have been provided with expert support from an educational consultant.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is outstanding. Governors support the school exceptionally well and do not shy away from challenging its leaders. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body show leadership of the highest calibre. Governors understand data and know about the quality of teaching. They ask tough questions about any underperformance. Any teacher who does not perform well is not allowed to move up the pay scale. The focus is on providing the best quality of education for all pupils. Safeguarding meets all requirements, including for training. Financial decisions, including the use of the pupil-premium funding, are based on driving forward pupils' achievement. In spite of some severely limiting factors, the school has improved over recent months and is moving from strength to strength.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135548
<b>Local authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	402718

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	109
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	27
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Harle
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Djezzar
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01302 720790
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