

Maplefields School

Tower Hill Road, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN18 0TH

Inspection dates

31 January - 01 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All groups of pupils and students make outstanding progress, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make rapid progress, both personally and academically, and are prepared especially well for their future lives.
- Pupils are taught exceptionally well. There is a sense of common purpose which runs through the teaching, to which pupils respond readily.
- Senior leaders, governors, and other adults at the academy work extremely well together to maintain the school's high standards of teaching and to enable the pupils to achieve their very best.
- Teachers and their assistants are highly skilled at helping pupils to control their behaviour. Consequently, learning and lessons are rarely disrupted.
- Pupils work hard to live up to the high expectations set for them, and to ensure that their behaviour is outstanding.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop self-awareness, social skills and independence. Pupils feel safe, secure and cared for very well while at school.
- The school has rightly identified the need to ensure that its drive to broaden pupils' and students' literacy and communication skills is maintained across all year groups.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 complete lessons over some seven and a half hours. Four observations were held jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- All primary phase classes, all four class teachers and their teaching assistants were seen. Five of the secondary phase teachers were observed. In addition, three visiting tutors were observed working with the pupils and students.
- It was not possible to see the sixth form group as the students were away from school on a residential visit. However, discussions about the sixth form were held with staff and the students' work was scrutinised.
- At the time of the inspection there were no pupils from Years 1 and 2 on the academy's roll.
- During the inspection, inspectors heard pupils from Year 6 read. In addition they observed the daily arrivals and departures of pupils and students by taxi and observed breakfast and lunchtime activities. They attended assemblies, a school council meeting, scrutinised the pupils' work and observed sessions led by visiting professionals to the school.
- Meetings were held with various groups of pupils and students, and many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils and students throughout the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of the academy's documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, governing body documents and information for families.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, class teachers, teaching assistants, the academy's outreach manager, its special educational needs coordinator, administrative staff and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the academy's consultant school improvement advisor.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and because all pupils and students arrive using a fleet of taxis, it was not possible to speak with any parents and carers. The inspectors took into account the 29 questionnaires returned by the school's staff.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Margaret Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school moved into its new, purpose built accommodation in April 2012. The school converted to become an academy in September 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school and has retained the same name. When a local authority school, Maplefields School was previously inspected in December 2009 and judged to be outstanding.
- The school provides a Behaviour Outreach Service in the local authority area and supports a number of similar schools across the country with their behaviour outreach and school improvement work. The school also provides support for the parents and carers of its pupils.
- Since moving into its new accommodation the numbers on roll have been increasing gradually.
- The school caters for pupils aged 5 to students aged 19 years. Sixth form students attend part-time at Maplefields and at Tresham College, following a range of vocational courses.
- All pupils and students have a statement of special educational need, primarily for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- Pupils and students may also have a range of other complex needs which may include Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Tourette's Syndrome, Mental Health Difficulties, Language and Learning difficulties, Asperger's Syndrome, or Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very few come from other ethnic heritage backgrounds. All speak English as their first language.
- The majority of pupils and students are boys.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above the national average.
- Mobility at the school is very high; few pupils continue their entire education at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the momentum for pupils' and students' improving progress in English is maintained across all year groups by:
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to develop and enrich their vocabulary so they can express themselves consistently well and with confidence
 - helping pupils to understand better and accept that reading and writing are essential parts of their work in all subjects
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and communication skills across the full range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils and students are often working well below national expectations when they first start at the school, which can be at any time during their school career. This often results from their individual needs and personal behavioural problems. Fewer than a fifth of the pupils stay at the school from Year 1 to the end of their education.
- All groups of pupils, including the large majority on the school's roll for whom it receives additional government funding, the few girls and those from minority ethnic communities, make excellent progress, given their particular, and often multiple, personal and learning difficulties and individual starting points. This is not only because of the outstanding teaching but also because all staff keep up-to-date through extensive professional training.
- School data show most pupils' achievement meets and exceeds expectations in both literacy and numeracy, and in the development of the pupils' more general communication skills. The school has rightly identified that pupils' skills are better overall in mathematics than in English. It has set itself the task of closing this gap; this is a key target for all teachers across the school which is already proving successful and accelerating pupils' progress in literacy. Central to this are providing opportunities for enriching pupils' vocabulary and for developing opportunities to improve reading and writing skills in a range of subjects, together with enriching pupils' communication skills.
- Nevertheless, the school continues to seek improvement. Pupils often join the school with limited vocabulary and negative attitudes to reading and writing. The school is currently working on a number of initiatives to promote the importance of literacy and communication skills; this message is being promoted increasingly successfully with the pupils.
- When hearing Year 6 pupils read, it was clear they all had up-to-date 'reading logs' with useful information about their progress and the books they had read. Reading is promoted well as a regular activity on a daily basis. Pupils read well given their range of difficulties. The teaching of the sound that letters and groups of letters make give pupils the confidence to tackle new or unfamiliar words; such success adds significantly to their developing enjoyment of reading.
- Particularly good progress was seen during a Year 9 design and technology lesson. Discussions with the pupils showed they had come a long way in turning their creative ideas for an MP3 player into practical reality. In the process they had learnt a great deal about both the materials they were using and electronics. Their practical making and construction skills were standing them in good stead for either future work or simply for hobby purposes. They also showed an excellent understanding of the importance of safety in a workshop.
- The school offers a great deal to its sixth form students. The subjects studied, and the courses followed, are matched very well to the students' needs and interests. There is evidence in their work not only of qualifications already achieved, but also that they complete a great deal of quality work in the process. Presentation is of a high standard, and shows a range of practical activities, as well as interesting academic work. Students also acquire valuable personal skills; their residential trip to London was organised entirely by themselves.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils' outstanding achievement is underpinned securely by the regular and careful checking and

tracking of each individual pupil's progress. Planning for each pupil is tailored exceptionally well to meet their needs; it is used consistently well to support and challenge them, both in and out of lessons. This helps sustain pupils' outstanding achievement and goes a long way to explain why teaching is so consistently effective.

- The whole approach of the teaching and support staff towards their pupils is exemplary. Teachers plan activities meticulously; attending to pupils' individual needs effectively ensures that they make at least good progress. There is constant encouragement and involvement with the pupils which keeps them on their toes, on task, and interested. Pupils are stimulated to listen, think and try their best.
- Teachers are skilled at getting the very best out of their pupils and no time is wasted in lessons. Pupils are involved quickly at the start of each lesson and given no time to become distracted in any way. Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning in lessons through their excellent support for pupils' social and emotional as well as academic needs. Marking is also a strength, giving pupils both helpful support and focused guidance.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is so effective because each pupil's individual education plan includes risk assessments which enable staff to spot very early any signs of an emerging problems. Staff act swiftly to check the escalation of any issues. Prevention is the order of the day; the cure is in pupils' progress. Pupils understand this, and respond very quickly to staff because they know they have their interests at heart.
- In one Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils came in rather bubbly following an achievement assembly in which their successes for the week were celebrated. High expectations, and a good dose of humour, involved the pupils very quickly in an exploration of proper and improper fractions. All pupils made a positive contribution, and the idea posed by one pupil that an improper fraction was 'chubby' because the larger number was on top, certainly helped others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Given that every pupil and student at the school has behavioural, social, emotional, and sometimes mental health difficulties general behaviour around the school, and certainly attitudes to learning, are exceptional.
- Many arrive at the school having been excluded from other schools or with major gaps in their schooling and education. Some have understandably negative attitudes to adults and education in general. In some cases it does take time for pupils to settle and there have to be occasional exclusions if outbursts are physical. However, well-established routines, calm approaches and high expectations from all adults enable pupils to make remarkable improvements in their behaviour.
- Staff are most sensitive to the times when pupils may need the equivalent of a 'security blanket'. Adults are equally conscious of the need to challenge pupils to stand independently, take responsibility for their actions and gain rapidly in self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control. Consequently, learning and lessons are rarely disrupted; even then this tends to be only briefly.
- Collectively, the school enables its pupils to appreciate the potential implications of their behaviour on both themselves and others. Consequently, pupils make rapid gains in their social development and moral understanding. This helps both staff and pupils to keep the school free from bullying in all its forms including cyber-bullying. Overall, the school's approach to the pupils'

more general spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an important strength.

- Pupils learn to control their excesses of emotion, whether anger or excitement, because the school is able to provide a very wide range of support, expertise and resources to meet pupils' individual needs and vulnerabilities. Consequently, pupils are enabled to feel entirely safe while at school, both in lessons and when involved in more communal activities, including recreation.
- Trust is a vital ingredient in the school's approach. In a Year 11 science lesson, students were engrossed in collecting and processing data about the insulating properties of various materials. Discussions showed they appreciated and understood very well the total care necessary for their own and others' safety when handling boiling water and recording temperatures as it cooled.
- 'Danny the Reading Dog' is a regular and very popular visitor to the school. In one session involving Year 6 there was a wonderfully calm and relaxed atmosphere which gave one pupil in particular the confidence to read out loud to the greyhound, whose head rested on the pupil's knee. There was complete empathy between the boy and the dog, who was a non-judgemental listener. This typified the school's approach in building working relationships with the pupils.
- School data and records show it is having increasing success in enabling pupils to reintegrate into mainstream schools, if and when this is an appropriate 'next step'. This is always done only after wide consultations with the families and pupils concerned, and a broad range of fellow professionals. Such approaches also help prepare sixth form students very well for college life.
- The school's success in enabling pupils to be highly successful in managing their behaviour and safety is typified in a testimonial from a residential centre for a week's visit undertaken last term. Staff were impressed by the pupils and wrote: 'Their manners were impeccable. They were relentlessly enthusiastic about everything. They took part and listened carefully. They were superb ambassadors for the school.'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since ceasing to be a maintained school and becoming an academy, there has been no change in the leadership, management, governance and organisation of the school. There has been a seamless conversion. The school's current success is the result of many years of hard work and dedication on the part of the headteacher and other staff.
 - There is an outstanding capacity to sustain this excellence, not least because self-evaluation is searching, thorough and accurate. This has led, for example, to a whole school focus on closing the gap between attainment in literacy and numeracy, and also specific goals for teachers to help achieve this. Checks, at all levels of leadership to measure the success of these initiatives are actively in place.
 - The school considers very carefully how it should develop what is taught, and the courses it offers. This is reflected not only in the individual planning for pupils in each lesson, but also through the vocational courses provided through its effective partnership with a local college. The success of sixth form students in these means the range of courses is now being extended for Years 10 and 11 with catering, construction, media and motor vehicle courses now being offered on site, using the school's own, new, purpose built facilities.
 - In place of a local authority advisor, the school now employs its own school improvement advisor. Discussions with staff and governors confirm that the school is gaining very good value
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from this arrangement. The consultant watches the school's back, keeps it up-to-date, and helps share best practice between similar schools. Reports show regular review and valuable advice.

- The headteacher works very effectively alongside her colleagues. She has established a thoughtful and considered approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning; this both trusts and values what each individual member of staff contributes to the school, personally and professionally. Consequently, staff understand very well what makes high-quality learning.
 - The ways the school tracks the progress of its pupils are meticulous. They ensure that any pupil at risk of underachieving is identified quickly and ways to prevent this are established swiftly. The school makes full and constructive use of the nationally published information showing the progress of pupils with similar starting points; it uses this effectively to support its own pupils.
 - The monitoring of teaching takes place consistently, and naturally, each day. School records, and the joint lesson observation with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, show they have an excellent understanding and appreciation of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Senior leaders ensure all staff are highly skilled in teaching their pupils and students.
 - The school has a strong approach to ensuring equality of opportunity for all its pupils, this is reflected well not only in its policies but also in practice. This approach is integral to the school as the large majority of pupils attract additional government funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. The progress of such pupils is tracked closely by the school, and particularly by the assessment leader. The governing body ensures the additional funding is spent appropriately, and the impact of this is checked and recorded for each individual pupil.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is exceptionally well informed as a result of its continual monitoring of the school, particularly through its 'governor of the month' system, and through ensuring governors' own training is up-to-date. This provides very regular contact with the school and supplements the excellent information provided to the governing body by the staff and headteacher. This approach helps to underpin securely governors' overall in-depth understanding concerning the quality of teaching and the overall education the school provides for its pupils. The governing body checks regularly on the impact of the targets set for teachers. These are linked directly to the quality of teaching, salary structure and more general school improvement planning. The relevant committee keeps a close check on the school's finances and the governing body as a whole carries out its statutory responsibilities assiduously. The governing body also takes the safeguarding of pupils and students extremely seriously. Systems and processes for safeguarding pupils and for ensuring equal opportunities are secure. Overall, the school benefits extremely well from both the commitment and expertise of individual governors.
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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	138634
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	409393

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

Type of school	Academy special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Jervis
Headteacher	Lynda Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01536 424090
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