

# Hilltop School

Larch Road, Maltby, Rotherham, S66 8AZ

## Inspection dates

9–10 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 their personal development, communication, and literacy and numeracy skills.
- The majority of teaching is good and outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They are listened to and their views inform well-planned personal learning programmes that are carefully tailored to meet their complex needs.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Pupils feel safe at school and are well cared for and supported. The school's strengths in these areas have been maintained since the last inspection.
- The school is exceptionally well led by a visionary headteacher and senior leadership team. They work effectively together with staff and governors to develop teaching and students' achievement across the school.
- The well-planned curriculum provides a good range of opportunities to develop pupils' interests, aspirations and skills for independent living, employment and recreation.
- Highly effective partnership working supports pupils' emotional health and well-being, learning and development.
- Students aged 14-19 are superbly well prepared for independent living and future employment.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching, while good overall, does not ensure that work is matched precisely enough to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress in their learning.
- Adult support in lessons is not focused sharply enough on learning to ensure all pupils make swift progress.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils in lessons does not always help them to understand how to improve.
- The irregular attendance of some pupils is a barrier to improving their learning and achievement. School data are not analysed swiftly and carefully enough to identify where further intervention is required.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. Almost all teachers and classes were observed, including children attending the off-site early years setting.
- Meetings were held with staff, with members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body, with a representative from Rotherham local authority and with pupils.
- Inspectors considered 63 questionnaires returned by staff and 35 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also met with two parents and took account of written comments sent to them by two parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and school evaluation.

## Inspection team

Gina White, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pauline Pitman

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, with the greatest proportion experiencing severe and complex learning difficulties; just under a third experience profound and multiple learning difficulties and over a third of pupils have autistic spectrum conditions.
- A small number of pupils have complex medical needs and degenerative medical conditions.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small number of pupils from other White and Asian heritages.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above average. This is government funding that the school receives for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of military personnel on active service overseas.
- Small groups of sixth-form pupils attend alternative provision at Rotherham Community Arts and Technology College and work-based learning with a range of local employers.
- A small number of young children attend the early years setting at Maltby Redwood Primary School for part of the week.
- Since the last inspection the school has joined in federation with Kelford School; both special schools share the same Executive headteacher and, since September 2012, share the same governing body.
- The school holds specialist status in communication and interaction.

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

- Improve attendance by analysing data more thoroughly in order to identify the barriers for individuals and groups of pupils and develop a wider range of strategies to promote regular attendance.
- Ensure all teaching is as good as the best by:
  - refining and embedding the use of information about pupils' progress to ensure that activities and tasks are challenging and precisely focused to develop pupils' understanding of concepts and their skills in reading, writing and mathematics
  - sharpening the focus of all adult support to ensure that they consistently support learning, understand the next steps for all pupils, and adopt the emerging best practice in recording small steps in pupils' progress
  - improving feedback to pupils so that they are involved in monitoring their achievements and know what they can do to make faster progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils, including those with complex medical needs and those from all ethnic groups, make good progress from their generally low starting points to achieve challenging targets. This compares very well with national expectations.
- Pupils, in all classes, make rapid progress to develop communication skills. Pupils are learning to recognise pictures and the words and the sounds they represent and are making good progress in recognising numbers and developing basic number concepts.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress. They are beginning to respond very well to structured play and the expectations of the new setting at the local primary school.
- Pupils, particularly in Key Stages 2 to 4, are developing a wider range of speaking, listening and numeracy skills because most lessons encourage their regular use.
- Stories, rhymes and regular library sessions are encouraging pupils to develop good reading and writing habits. School plans giving greater emphasis to these aspects of learning are well-founded but have yet to result in excellent progress or deepen all pupils' love of reading and literature.
- The school targets the pupil premium money it receives exceptionally well and these pupils make faster progress than other groups to achieve their personal development, literacy, numeracy and ICT targets.
- Alternative provision, in the form of well-chosen college courses and tailored work placements, enables Key Stage 4 and sixth-form students to make exceptional progress to develop their learning, independence and ambition. Sixth-formers commented, 'You need to know your numbers and letters to work in the library and scan food in the supermarket.'
- Excellent sixth-form provision enables most students to gain qualifications and all are well prepared to make their next step. All continue their learning and gain places at college or in employment.
- Parents confirm their children make good progress. They are kept well informed about their children's learning and daily achievements.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Parents say their children are taught well and inspectors found that teaching is mostly good. Some excellent lessons were seen in each key stage.
- Teachers are particularly skilled in helping those who cannot speak to participate. A range of methods including signing, pictures, symbols and technologies are used to good effect to support learning in a range of subjects. Most staff gave pupils time to respond to their questions.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff develop children's curiosity and exploration well by providing stimulating things for them to do.
- Teachers plan interesting activities and make effective use of resources to motivate and sustain pupils' concentration. For example, pupils with the most severe and complex needs thoroughly enjoyed touching, holding and tasting fruit as they carefully listened to the story Mama Panya's pancakes.
- Some teachers are beginning to make better use of assessment information so that activities and tasks are precisely focused to challenge pupils and deepen their understanding of concepts. When this occurs pupils make outstanding progress in their learning. However, this is not consistent across all subjects or teaching teams.
- Teachers are especially accomplished in teaching science. Pupils made excellent progress in lessons exploring materials to understand concepts such as hot and cold, and hard and soft.

- Pupils' achievement is at the very highest level when teaching assistants and teachers are sharply focused on learning. In a few lessons pupils are not fully challenged to achieve their best because teachers do not make best use of teaching assistants, notably when working in whole-class groups.
- Good practice in support staff recording small steps in pupils' progress is developing. Pupils know when they have made good progress and their efforts are regularly and widely celebrated with 'Proud' certificates. However, feedback to them about how they can improve further is limited.

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

- Pupils are developing very good attitudes to learning, are keen to do things for themselves and demonstrate resilience and increasing independence. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- Typically, behaviour is very good; very young children, and those new to the school, respond well to the routines of school life and settle quickly to tasks in lessons. High levels of supervision help them to participate in a varied range of activities.
- Challenging behaviour is managed exceptionally well by the school. Staff work effectively with pupils, families and specialist services to devise support plans that are well tailored to individuals' complex needs. Consistent application of strategies has led to a marked reduction in behavioural incidents; pupils are less anxious and are making better progress in their work.
- Attendance is improving but remains below average. The school works effectively with families and health professionals to provide specialist support for pupils with medical conditions who are absent frequently or for long periods. However, the school has few strategies to promote good attendance more generally and leaders do not analyse data sufficiently to identify where they need to focus their efforts.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They say bullying does not happen but know what to do if it did. Pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties and complex medical needs are well cared for. Staff ensure that those who require intimate care or support, for example when feeding, are treated with respect and dignity.
- Pupils' good behaviour, safety and happiness at school are confirmed by all parents who responded to Parent View.

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

- Governors and senior leaders have led the school through a period of significant change since the last inspection. The Executive headteacher and senior leaders provide principled and dedicated leadership. Recent developments to improve the use of data and assessment are beginning to strengthen the impact teaching has on pupils' learning.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement and give strong guidance and support to staff, many of whom have recently joined the school.
- The quality of teaching is kept under regular review. Training and regular, focused observation and feedback by senior and middle leaders are helping staff to improve their practice to meet the higher expectations they have of them.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum has a good range of subjects, after-school clubs, trips and residential experiences. They are well coordinated to make learning relevant. They take account of pupils' interests and support pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, cultural, and personal and social development.
- Performing arts, physical education and ICT are strengths of the school. Pupils enthusiastically participate in school productions and delight in recalling their recent visit to Santa's grotto.
- Leaders have drawn effectively upon local authority networks to build excellent strategic partnerships with other schools, colleges, local businesses, and specialist social and health care

services. They make a significant contribution to broadening the curriculum and supporting pupils' learning, care and welfare needs.

- An emphasis on tailored, individual learning and care programmes ensures that all groups of pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. However, this is not embedded deeply enough across all classes to accelerate progress further and meet the school's ambition for all to excel.
- Partnership with parents is excellent. Daily 'home-school books', used consistently throughout the school, reflect the high priority the school gives to parents' views about their children's learning and care.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Governors and members of the school staff carry out regular checks to make sure pupils are kept safe. High levels of supervision contribute effectively to pupils staying safe in the different educational and work placement settings they attend.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair of the Governing Body has steered the new governing body well in its early stages since federation. She is regularly involved in the daily life of the school and, together with fellow governors, shares a passion to improve the school's accommodation and the quality of provision. The headteacher's timely and detailed reports, together with briefings and training about assessment data, help governors to strengthen their skills in holding the school to account and checking its work. Governors have a good understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Performance management procedures, arrangements for teachers' salary progression and procedures to appraise the headteacher's performance are rigorous. Governors use pupil premium funding for a range of support and development programmes to extend learning opportunities and develop pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Governors know what is spent and know from the regular reports they receive that this is having a good impact on pupils' academic progress and personal development.

## 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>	106972
<b>Local authority</b>	Rotherham
<b>Inspection number</b>	408909

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
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<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>	87
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carole Phillips
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nick Whittaker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01709 813386
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