

Gilbrook School

Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch, Wirral Merseyside, CH49 8HE

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Gilbrook makes an enormously positive difference to the lives of its pupils. From poor experiences and failed placements, many make such exceptional strides in their academic and personal development, that they are able to re-join mainstream schools and enjoy success there.
- In a secure and caring environment, pupils quickly settle and develop vastly improved attitudes to their learning, resulting in rapid progress, particularly noticeable in their excellent literacy and numeracy achievements.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers set ambitious targets for their pupils and they, along with their teaching assistants, are highly skilled at using a range of strategies to help their pupils achieve them.
- Pupils are unanimous in stating that Gilbrook is 'the best school ever'. They recognise how much it develops their confidence and helps them learn to manage their behaviours. Pupils contribute to their own behaviour targets and are eager to achieve them.
- Senior leaders, including governors are extremely well-informed about how well individual pupils are doing. The school has been led and managed exceptionally well to provide stability over a long period. They have ensured the school has been focussed on improving teaching and pupil achievement.
- Because they know the school so well, leaders recognise the need to further improve the skills and knowledge of staff in working with the increasing number of pupils with autism spectrum conditions.
- Parents have nothing but praise for the school. Several parents commented that the school had transformed the lives of their children and of their families.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed ten lessons or parts of lessons taught by 8 teachers. Two of these were shared observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, a parent group and a group of pupils. Informal discussions were also held with pupils around the school and in the playground.
- The inspector took account of views expressed in the school's own parent and pupil questionnaires but there were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to take them into account. The returned questionnaires from 20 members of staff were also reviewed.
- The inspector looked at information about pupils' progress, records of behaviour, extended school activities, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, reports about performance management of staff, the work of the outreach service and parent group and how the pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on pupil achievement.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Gilbrook School provides for primary-age pupils who have a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils have additional learning difficulties and disabilities including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, autism spectrum conditions, specific and moderate learning difficulties, and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils with additional complex needs, particularly autism, is increasing.
- The school admits pupils from across the whole of the Wirral local authority at any stage in their primary education. At present there are no pupils below Key Stage 2 and there are only two girls. Pupils often spend less than three years at the school and it is becoming increasingly common for pupils to be admitted in Years 5 and 6.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is exceptionally high. Pupil premium is additional funding from the government for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and for those children in the care of the local authority.
- The school manages a behaviour support service on behalf of the local authority, providing advice and support to all of the Wirral's primary schools. It has recently agreed to offer temporary provision to pupils from the sixth day of an exclusion from other primary schools.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has been re-located to a new site in a refurbished school building.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the skills and knowledge of staff in working with the increasing number of pupils who have autism spectrum conditions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils arrive at Gilbrook School at any time during the school year having had a poor start to their education. Most have been out of school for periods of time or have been unable to learn effectively in mainstream schools. The staff quickly build pupils' self-esteem and fill the gaps in their learning.
- Remarkable progress is made in developing reading, writing and mathematical skills from low starting points. As a result of the challenging targets which teachers now set, records of pupils' progress year on year show increasingly rapid progress. Many pupils now achieve better than expected progress, even though their attainment is usually still below national expectations. This has been recognised through the achievement and renewal of the Basic Skills Award.
- The large majority of pupils are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. This is used highly effectively to provide one-to-one sessions to rapidly build pupils' phonic skills (the sounds that letters make) and word recognition skills. Pupils can then demonstrate these skills in all subjects in the curriculum. For example, in a lesson about the Romans, older pupils were able to find out information for themselves, researching in books and using computers and could then use what they had learned in their writing.
- All groups of pupils make equally good and outstanding progress, for instance, the very small number of girls do just as well as the boys. This is because of the individual approach to meeting all pupils' needs ensures equal opportunities for all. Pupils are clear that they enjoy all that the school has to offer.
- The majority of pupils make impressive gains in a relatively short space of time, in their academic work, in their self-confidence and in self-managing their behaviour. With the support of the highly-regarded outreach team and school staff, a significant number of pupils are able to successfully transfer to mainstream primary schools or to secondary schools when they leave Gilbrook. Pupils are very well-prepared to move on to the next stage in their lives.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The school's own observations of teaching have demonstrated the quality of teaching over time is outstanding. No teaching seen during this inspection was less than good and most of it was outstanding. Teachers have adapted well to the requirements of pupils with increasingly complex needs, such as autism and are keen to develop their skills further. Teaching engages and enthuses pupils so that they want to learn.
- Teachers are extremely proficient at assessing what pupils already know when they arrive at the school and building on this for each pupil as an individual. They break down lessons into short bursts of fun activities and gradually build these up to help pupils maintain concentration.
- Teachers, and the very skilled teaching assistants, constantly question and explore pupils' understanding and help them to develop their own ideas. They re-teach and re-phrase information to ensure pupils have grasped it fully.
- Lessons are extremely well-planned to match individual needs and abilities and extend the learning of each and every pupil. Teachers ensure that literacy and mathematical skills are emphasised throughout the day. Activities and tasks are often ambitious and pupils respond well to the challenge, often surprising themselves by what they can do. In a mathematics lesson on fractions, a pupil who worked out what two-thirds of a pack of six hot cross buns would be, proudly exclaimed 'I can do that!'
- Teachers praise enthusiastically where it is deserved and gently remind pupils not to call out, to listen carefully and to think through their answers. As activities finish, pupils are asked how well they think they have done and what they have understood, before moving on to the next task. Teachers constantly adapt what they are teaching to respond to these assessments of learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils at Gilbrook School have produced a statement which begins 'We are happy to come to school every day. We feel safe, cared for, helped and protected...' and this sums up what pupils told the inspector.
- Pupils usually arrive at the school with low self-esteem and little confidence but make remarkable progress in managing their own behaviour and in tolerating others. This is because the school uses clear and consistent strategies and pupils know what they have to do to gain rewards. They love to receive house points and certificates at assemblies and are especially proud to be awarded 'keep your cool' certificates.
- Parents recognise the improvements their children make and are appreciative of the support they are given by the home-school liaison worker and by other staff to manage their children at home. Attendance at the parents' group is high and parents spoke warmly about the information and advice they are given and of the opportunity to meet other parents and carers. As one parent said 'It was such a relief to realise that I was not the only one who had a child with difficult behaviour.'
- Behaviour targets are included in pupils' individual education plans and staff and pupils refer to them as necessary in the day. Pupils know what their targets are and are encouraged to contribute to them and to express how they want to improve.
- Although pupils say that bullying very occasionally occurs, they are confident that it will be dealt with by adults. They trust the staff at Gilbrook School to be fair and to care for them. All staff have received training in restorative justice to help pupils think through their actions and responses to others and are developing this work with pupils. The emphasis is always on praising positive behaviours rather than on sanctions for negative incidents.
- As a result of the transformations in pupils' behaviour after admission, the school is a calm and happy place, where learning can take place very effectively. Pupils want to come to school and attendance levels are high for the vast majority of pupils. There have been no exclusions for nearly three years.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has led this outstanding school for many years but has lost no enthusiasm in taking actions to continuously improve the school still further. For example, there has been a recent review of the curriculum to ensure it meets the increasingly complex needs of the pupils being admitted to the school.
- The engaging curriculum effectively captivates pupils' interests. It makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through topics such as Chinese New Year, fundraising for Red Nose Day and visits to Styal Mill to learn about life in the Victorian era.
- The move to new premises has provided a much improved learning environment and the school makes the most of what the site can offer. Pupils are able to choose from a range of enrichment activities during the Friday afternoon activity sessions when they can learn to ride a bike or grow vegetables, for example.
- Information about pupil progress, about behaviour incidents and about the quality of teaching are collected and analysed rigorously by school leaders. Teachers are set challenging targets which are linked to whole-school improvement and pupil progress and contribute to decisions about pay progression. School leaders, including members of the governing body, have an excellent understanding of the increasingly complex needs of the pupils and ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are being professionally developed to meet these needs.
- The school provides outreach support and advice to prevent exclusions, to all of Wirral's primary schools on request. The current work with over 50 primary schools is very highly regarded and

enables staff from mainstream schools to share best practice with Gilbrook staff. The local authority recognises the high quality contribution the school makes to its services so provides only light touch support. There is general agreement that the school has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

- Excellent relationships with a range of agencies support children and their families at home as well as at school. Gilbrook works with a number of providers of services outside of school hours, in children's home localities and share information to make schemes and placements successful.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has grown and developed to contribute to the sustained outstanding education provided at the school. Governors ensure they have up-to-date information and the knowledge to ask questions and challenge the school's managers. Finances are monitored and used efficiently, including the spending of the pupil premium, to be sure it is effectively improving pupils' work in literacy which is the current focus for the funding. Safeguarding responsibilities are given the highest priority. Governors attend training provided by the local authority. They support the development of staff, for example by supporting the headteacher to develop the role of subject leaders. They know how well pupils are achieving and are determined to grow and adapt the provision to meet the ever more complex challenges pupils are facing.

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	105134
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	402965

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Roper
Headteacher	Robert Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
Telephone number	0151 5223900
Fax number	0151 5223909
Email address	headteacher@gilbrook.wirral.sch.uk

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