

# Alexandra School

Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, London, HA2 9DX

**Inspection dates** 21–22 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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 because:

- There is a long-established culture of continually seeking to improve all aspects of provision for the pupils.
- Almost all pupils make rapid progress from their starting points and the majority achieve better than expected nationally. The very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress in their communication and independence skills.
- Teaching is outstanding and there has been consistent improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers are skilled in adapting learning for the needs of each pupil.
- The care and safeguarding of the pupils is exemplary.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is high as a result. Their attitudes to other children and adults, and to their learning activities, are extremely positive. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- There is excellent leadership and management at each level. Senior and middle leaders check the work of the school tirelessly so that pupils make outstanding progress.
- The management of teachers' performance is rigorous and thorough, and has had a significant impact on the consistently improving teaching standards.
- The governing body is very well informed about standards and the school's development, and provides excellent challenge and support to the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons and parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with a member of the senior management team.
- Meetings were held with staff, middle and senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online parents' and carers' questionnaire (Parent View) as well as surveys of parent opinion conducted by the school. The team considered 37 staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors looked at records of the pupils' progress and behaviour since the previous inspection as well as monitoring reports on the standard of teaching. The inspection team examined records and procedures to ensure pupils' attendance as well as procedures relating to their safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with a wide range of complex needs. These include moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorders.
- Three quarters of the pupils are from a range of ethnic groups, reflecting the make-up of the borough. Half of these pupils speak English as an additional language but very few are at the early stages of learning English. Boys outnumber girls by three to one.
- The school offers outreach provision and specific training for staff in local schools in aspects of special educational needs.
- The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection.

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

- Make sure that the way the recording of assessment information on pupils is presented is consistent across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- The attainment of pupils remains low because of their complex learning difficulties, but almost all of them make rapid progress and achieve above the levels expected for pupils with similar disabilities. The outstanding progress of pupils already observed in the previous two inspections has been consistently improved further.
- Pupils make excellent progress over time in their communication and literacy skills. The very few younger children of Reception age get off to a very good start. They are assimilated into Key Stage 1 classes and benefit from skilled teaching which effectively promotes their language, and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Older pupils make very good gains in reading, writing and number skills because of carefully planned individual literacy and numeracy tuition. The pupils' development speeds up further because reading and writing development is planned for and practised in each curriculum subject.
- Pupils from all groups, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with complex learning needs, make equally good progress. This is because teachers adapt activities extremely effectively to take account of each pupil's learning needs, and because language and literacy are so well taught. As a result, the equal opportunities of each pupil to succeed are excellent. There is no discrimination between groups or individual pupils.
- Extra provision to enhance the learning of pupils receiving the pupil premium has been very effective. The funding has increased the scope and impact of learning mentors to see that pupils eligible for free school meals narrow the gap in attainment with the other pupils. The school's tracking records of pupils' progress show that this has been successful.
- The pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. After a very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils develop excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Well-organised assemblies encourage them to reflect on and consider a range of moral and social issues. They are unfailingly polite and considerate to others and they develop a very good understanding of social cohesion through going on many visits, for example in camping expeditions each year which each pupil is encouraged to attend.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because teachers are passionate about adapting learning activities precisely to meet the needs of each pupil. The assessment of the pupils' progress in very small steps is exemplary. This enables teachers and other adults to tailor learning so pupils confidently build on what they already know and understand.
- Adults have a very clear grasp of their pupils' ability and how the next small step will be accomplished. They have correspondingly high expectations of their pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils find their learning challenging but within their reach. This makes their work interesting and fun, and they respond with remarkable concentration and perseverance.
- Occasionally, the recording of the assessments is not clear enough or consistently presented. This can cause confusion when records are passed on to another teacher at the end of the year.
- Lessons are very well planned; the work of other adults is organised effectively to support individual pupils or very small groups, and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers are particularly proficient at addressing focused questions to each pupil, using structured language to check and enhance their learning and to encourage each pupil's correct spoken response.
- The teaching of communication, reading writing and number is very well planned. There is a cohesive organisation throughout the school and pupils make excellent progress in a clearly structured programme, which is checked carefully to make sure it is effective. As a result, the

pupils make outstanding progress.

- The excellent standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage are driven by very good teaching and assessment.

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

- Pupils find their activities consistently interesting and their attitudes to their learning are outstanding. They invariably try their best and they develop strong, positive relationships with other children and with staff.
- The pupils' behaviour was judged good in the previous inspection and has continued to improve. The school's careful monitoring of incidents shows extremely low levels of bullying or racist-motivated incidents.
- Through well-taught messages in assembly and through personal, health and social education lessons, the pupils learn about the different forms of bullying and how to resist them. There have been no fixed-term exclusions this year, partly as a result of well-directed pupil premium funding for vulnerable and challenging pupils. The school is a happy, relaxed and friendly place.
- The pupils' behaviour is managed consistently and effectively. Pupils clearly understand and value the reward systems and try their best to live up to their teachers' expectations. On the few occasions when a child's behaviour becomes challenging, adults respond quickly and sensitively to calm pupils and to help them understand their behaviour.
- Pupils, parents and carers, and staff are very positive about pupils' enjoyment of school, their behaviour and the standards of care they receive. Pupils feel secure. Over time, they develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Every child is well known to staff and receives a very high level of care and support. The pupils' love of school is shown in their high rates of attendance.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher's experience and inspirational commitment to excellence have enabled him to drive continual improvement over a long period. He has led and encouraged the development of senior and middle leaders to the point where they make a significant contribution to the school's improvement. There is an uncompromising attitude amongst all the staff that nothing short of outstanding is good enough. Morale is extremely high.
- Leaders consistently strive for improvement in teaching standards. Monitoring teachers' work has a high priority. There are excellent procedures to manage teachers' performance, whereby the work of each teacher is reviewed in depth. Where further support or training is indicated, this is provided quickly. There are clear links to salary progression and increased responsibility.
- The skills of teachers are acknowledged across the local authority since they are regularly asked to provide training for other schools. The authority has been of value to the school in providing advice and support from its own officers while maintaining 'light-touch' monitoring.
- Standards which were judged excellent in previous inspections have continued to improve because of well-established procedures to check teachers' planning rigorously and regularly, their assessments of pupils' work and their performance in the classroom. As a result, almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress.
- The school's strategies for finding out how well it is doing are outstanding. Senior staff have an exceptionally clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas to be developed. They are fully aware, for instance, of the slight inconsistency in recording assessment of the pupils' progress.
- The range of subjects and courses is adapted precisely to meet the needs of each pupil. The activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are organised very successfully to meet the needs of Reception-aged children and those in Years 1 and 2. There is an excellent approach to teaching the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. Leaders check each element of what is planned and suggest regular small changes to make sure pupils are fully engaged in

their learning. The many trips and visitors to school enhance learning. These experiences contribute very well to pupils' academic achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- There are excellent relations with parents and carers, who think highly of the school. As one parent commented, 'All the staff: that is what makes Alexandra so good.' The school provides regular meetings and training for interested parents and carers. They are very satisfied with the school's safeguarding arrangements, which meet statutory requirements.
- The school has an excellent track record over many years. This is because leaders are never satisfied with its performance but rigorously check and improve all that it offers. The level of pupils' achievements and personal development continues to improve, accompanied by a consistent rise in teaching standards. The school is extremely well placed to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body robustly hold the school's leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Through regular visits, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and day-to-day challenges and triumphs. They are exceptionally well informed about pupils' progress and the management of the performance of teachers. Governors manage financial control through highly effective procedures, including the salary arrangements for teaching, and are fully involved in how good teaching is rewarded. They also know how any underperformance is tackled. They maintain very close supervision of pupil premium funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. Governors take part in regular training and, as such, nominated members are well informed, for instance, about health and safety matters and the safeguarding of the children.

## 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>	102262
<b>Local authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	402882

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>	3–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	81
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Stalley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dennis Goldthorpe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 July 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8864 2739
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8864 9336
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