

Piper Hill Specialist Support School

Firbank Road, Newall Green, Manchester, Lancashire, M23 2YS

Inspection dates 26–27 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.

- Since the time of the last inspection this outstanding school has continued to improve.
- All students regardless of their starting points, age or background make excellent progress in their lessons and over time. By the time they leave school, students attain many externally accredited awards which celebrate their outstanding achievements.
- Teaching is typically outstanding and never less than good. Lessons are characterised by carefully planned activities, pitched at just the right level and very well-deployed experienced teaching assistants.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding as is their assessment of students' individual needs. This allows lessons to move along quickly. Teachers know how to make learning relevant and fun, while having very high expectations for what students should achieve.
- Students behave exceptionally well and their excellent attitudes to learning are a significant factor in the outstanding progress they make in their lessons.
- Students are proud of their school and as a result, attendance is high. It is very clear why students 'do not want to miss a single day'.
- The sixth form is outstanding and reflects the same excellent practice seen across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The headteacher has established a highly effective leadership team. Together they have a crystal clear vision of what makes an outstanding school. They are exceptionally ambitious to ensure this safe and caring school continues to improve.
- Senior leaders' relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching is very successful and all staff work exceptionally hard to ensure students achieve their very best.
- A highly experienced governing body carries out its duties to ensure all students receive the best possible standards of education and care.
- The school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance are robust and leaders are very clear about what actions are required to bring about further improvements. For example, plans are currently being made to further improve the reading ability of the least-able students. These steps will require careful checking to ensure their success.
- The local authority uses the school as a model of best practice and the headteacher has supported a number of schools to improve, both locally and nationally.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or small group activities, of which nine were joint observations with members of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, school staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to students in lessons about their work, looked at books and coursework, listened to students read and talked to representatives from the school council.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents, took account of a recent school survey and considered the 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey.
- Inspectors took account of 44 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, looked at progress data, performance management information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, as well as documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jim Alexander, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All students are supported by school action plus, are disabled and have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of students have either severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties. A smaller number also manage challenging behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium fund is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and supports a number of other schools within the local authority and wider afield.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Keep a close check on the actions that are planned to improve the reading ability of the least-able students to ensure that these actions are successful.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All students start school with standards which are exceptionally low compared with those typically expected for their age. They are helped to settle quickly, develop very good attitudes to learning and soon make the most of what this outstanding school has to offer.
- All students in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the Further Education department make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics and for most it is excellent. As a result, by the time students leave school they attain many externally accredited awards.
- There are no underachieving groups and all make much faster progress from their starting points than normally expected. Teachers plan carefully and cater for the wide range of individual needs within their class. Consequently, students who are experiential learners, supported learners, or who are able to work more independently make the same excellent progress in their learning.
- Students from minority ethnic groups are supported to make equally outstanding progress and this typifies the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- Much is achieved to improve students' communication and language skills and also to develop lifelong learning skills. The school also helps students to acquire business enterprise skills and they have developed their own school radio station.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. As a result, students who are looked after by the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals make the same excellent progress as others in the school.
- The school's robust system to track students' progress has highlighted that the least-able students in Key Stage 3 make outstanding progress developing their communication and number skills but only good progress in reading. Plans have been developed, staff trained and resources allocated to help to further improve this aspect of their learning.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding and consistently strong across all year groups.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is impressive and their assessment of each individual student's ability is highly effective. This enables lessons to move along at just the right pace for students to make the best possible progress in the time available.
- The quality of guidance is excellent and matched by the speed with which students respond to what teachers ask of them.
- Lessons are designed to be practical and fun. Students also respond exceptionally well to teachers' high expectations of what can be achieved.
- Throughout lessons, targets are regularly reviewed and learning is moved swiftly on when students are ready for more.
- Teachers and support staff are very experienced to know when to step in and support learning and when to give students time and space to work things out for themselves. This supports the development of students' independence exceptionally well.
- Students are taught to take pride in their work and consequently the quality and presentation of written work, for example, is high.
- Throughout the school, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and staff have very effective ways to encourage students to manage their own behaviour well. Developing independent learning skills is a key strength within the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- One of the most notable features of this school is students' excellent attitudes to their lessons. They respond exceptionally well to the challenging activities provided and persevere for sustained periods of time with great success. They are extremely polite and courteous and older students provide very good role models for younger students in school.
- Overall attendance is improving every year and is now high compared with the national average. The vast majority of pupils are punctual to their lessons.
- Students are well informed about how to keep themselves safe and knowledgeable about all types of bullying. Parents agree that their children are happy to attend school and are kept safe.
- School records are meticulously kept and reviewed regularly. These show that students' behaviour is excellent and those who manage their own behavioural difficulties are exceptionally well supported.
- The school goes more than the extra mile to ensure students have a happy and secure time at school. For example, in partnership with the Guide Dog Association, a recent initiative has been to introduce a young Labrador, Teal the Buddy Dog. She has quickly become a much loved and appreciated member of the school community and enables students to develop a sense of well-being.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers at all levels work exceptionally well as a team in the continuous drive to ensure students' achievement is outstanding. The process for checking the school's performance is robust and accurate. This ensures that appropriate priorities are identified in the school development plans.
- The school has not stood still since the time of the last inspection. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, in close collaboration with senior leaders, has ensured that a greater proportion of teaching is now consistently outstanding.
- All leaders regularly check the robustness of the quality of teaching in lessons and over time. Staff training is a high priority in the school and arrangements to support colleagues new to the profession or new to teaching in special schools are exemplary.
- A comprehensive performance management process is firmly established and regular meetings to check on students' progress enable leaders to hold teachers robustly to account for achievement in each class.
- Leaders ensure that while English and mathematics are a high priority, much time is also given to develop students' interests and skills in a wide range of subjects. The excellent curriculum is enhanced by many visits and visitors. For example, the school's rich tradition in developing music and performing arts is enhanced by effective partnerships with outside providers.
- The local authority provides light-tough support for this outstanding school. Indeed, the school is so well regarded that it regularly supports improvements in other schools within the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and passionate about ensuring that students' progress is outstanding. Governors attend training and are exceptionally well informed and bring a wide range of experience to their work. They bring the right balance of support and challenge to ensure the school continues to improve. They have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and use the performance management systems to reward good teachers through progression along the pay scale. They use data to effectively monitor the school's performance. They are fully involved in the decision making about how pupil premium funds are used and are developing robust skills to check up on its impact. Governors have planned with leaders what steps are required to further improve the reading skills of the least-able students. Together with senior leaders, they now need to keep a careful watch on the actions being taken to ensure their success. Governors make sure that safeguarding requirements are met.

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	105611
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	402982

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Jones
Headteacher	Linda Jones
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
Telephone number	0161 436 3009
Fax number	0161 945 6625
Email address	admin@piperhill.manchester.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

