

# West Gate School

Glenfield Road, Leicester, LE3 6DG

**Inspection dates** 18–19 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is good.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good gains in communication through using pictures, signs and words.
- Provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Students achieve exceptionally well and every student currently goes on to college on leaving school.
- A new and innovative scheme in partnership with a national employer is equipping students with outstanding work-related skills.
- The school is exceptionally skilful in raising the academic and personal achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils' understanding of how to assess risks and keep themselves safe is outstanding.
- All leaders, including governors, are committed to putting change into practice to remove any obstacles that get in the way of learning for pupils.
- They are meticulous and thorough in checking the quality of teaching and provide extensive ongoing training of teachers. This enables them to improve their practice, raises pupils' achievement and supports school improvement.
- The school provides good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in mainstream schools throughout Leicester City.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, pupils are not challenged to move on to new work quickly enough.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of what pupils can already do to plan new work for them.
- Not all staff working with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have sufficient confidence to introduce recent changes made to the approach for working with them.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 17 different teachers. All of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at their work when observing these lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils (supported by staff), governors, a representative from the local authority and the school's professional partner (a headteacher from another special school allocated to the school as part of the scheme to support a new headteacher).
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, pupils' individual plans, the reading scheme, feeding plans, the school's improvement plan, monitoring information, the appraisal policy, all safeguarding documents and minutes of the governing body meetings. Inspectors examined 60 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with e-mails and letters sent into the school marked for the attention of the inspection team. The lead inspector also spoke with a few parents over the telephone and in person.

## Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Woodall	Additional Inspector
Philippa Holliday	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school makes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. In addition, some pupils have complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has specialist status for cognition and learning.
- It has the local authority's only Department for Education approved specialist autism provision, inspected and accredited in July 2012, for both primary and secondary aged pupils. A very few of these pupils are dual registered (that means they are on the roll of this school but remain on the roll of the school they attended previously).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, as is the proportion from families where English is an additional language.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The school makes use of alternative colleges, providers and locations to provide education for its pupils. In September 2011, it opened the Learning Centre based at New College, Leicester. This project, in partnership with a national employer, focuses on providing the life and employability skills required to fast track sixth form students into employment when they leave school.
- The recently launched Learning Centre project has resulted in an increased admission of 14 to 19 year-old students with moderate learning difficulties from across the city.
- In September 2012, the school became a Trust by joining the Well Trust.
- This school is currently located on a split site. There is an ongoing new school build project with a plan to have a school based on one site.
- West Gate School provides outreach support to mainstream schools throughout Leicester City to help them support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2012 and the deputy headteacher took up post in December 2012. At the time of the inspection, the leadership structure was still undergoing a review to best meet the needs of the pupils. A few posts in the new structure had not yet been filled.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes by:
  - making effective use of information about what pupils already know and can do to plan work so that it is set at the right level to ensure they are moved on to new learning
  - ensuring pupils are challenged early on in all lessons and are not left for too long working on tasks they have fully grasped.
  
- Improve the leadership and management of the provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties by:
  - ensuring that the staff team who work with these pupils always plan specific activities to enable each pupil to reach an important learning outcome
  - making sure that these pupils are always given sufficient time to respond to questions by gesture, pointing with their eyes or reaching out to hit a switch
  - training all staff who work with these pupils so that the newly agreed approach to measuring the small steps in these pupils' progress is used consistently
  - enabling all staff to have the confidence to change what they are doing on the 'spot' to move these pupils on with important new small steps of learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage knowing few or no words. They find it hard to sit still for a few moments and cannot share toys with one another. Helped to overcome these difficulties, they make good progress in communication and playing co-operatively with one another.
- Measured from their various starting points, students in the sixth form make outstanding progress in mathematics and English, some gaining GCSE passes and others Entry level qualifications. All succeed in getting sufficient qualifications to go on to college when they leave school.
- Sixth form students following the vocational route of learning (alternative provision together with the support of a national employer) make outstanding progress in a wide range of employability skills. They gain exceptionally relevant work-related literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills.
- Throughout Key Stages 1 to 4, all pupils whatever their particular disability or special educational needs make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A few read by pointing at a book with their eyes; others read using pictures and symbols; and the most able have the skills to read simple texts fluently and confidently at the level appropriate to their ability. The most-able pupils are able to work out how to read unfamiliar words and then know how to find out what those words mean.
- A wide range of innovative approaches enables all pupils to achieve well in writing. Hand-over-hand support enables those pupils with the most complex needs to experience writing as they use dough to make marks and shape letters. Use of specialist symbol programs on computers enables pupils with severe learning difficulties to develop good writing skills. The most-able pupils write sentences with a pen using basic punctuation accurately.
- Pupils' mathematical development builds step-by-step on their previous learning and all make good progress. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties feel the shape of numbers and follow a line of light with their eyes. Pupils develop relevant mathematical skills such as telling the time and using money to shop. The most-able pupils grasp the algebra and geometry skills required to be successful in nationally recognised examinations.
- Life skills like learning how to travel independently and safely, preparing a meal on a tight budget, and how to manage living in a flat with friends are exceptionally well developed.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families who speak English as an additional language, make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively, in a range of creative ways, to speed up the learning of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority. Consequently, these pupils read as well as their classmates and are supported in overcoming obstacles to their learning as their very specific special educational needs are met.
- In most lessons, pupils make good progress; in an increasing number, particularly in the sixth

form, progress is outstanding. However, in a few lessons, particularly for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils' rate of progress is not always as good as it ought to be because the teaching is not challenging enough and pupils are not given the time to respond to the questions that teaching assistants ask.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Most teaching is good. It is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there are pockets of outstanding teaching, particularly in the sixth form.
- Teaching is improving rapidly because of the targeted advice and training teachers receive following observations of their lessons by the senior leadership team. In particular, this has resulted in consistently high quality in the teaching of reading.
- There is some inspirational teaching. Such teaching was seen in an information and communication technology lesson in the sixth form focusing on animation. This lesson sparkled. Following an outstanding demonstration by the teacher, based on excellent subject knowledge, students used their skills superbly well to produce a high quality short film, which could be shown at different speeds. Their enthusiasm for learning was amazing and they developed outstanding computer skills.
- Flexible planning and imaginative approaches ensure that the needs of most pupils are met well. For example, the specialist approach to teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders speeds their learning. Similarly, outstanding subject knowledge and creativity increase the rate of the learning for sixth form students.
- Typically, teachers have high expectations and question pupils effectively in a way that deepens their understanding. Relationships in such lessons are powerful and so even pupils with very complex behaviour feel comfortable to take safe risks. They often succeed in learning more than is expected of them as a result.
- In a few lessons, pupils are not challenged quickly enough so as to speed their learning. They are left for too long doing work they do not need to do because they have grasped the concept. In such lessons, teachers do not make effective use of what they know about what pupils know and can do to plan new learning to move them on.
- In a few lessons for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the activities that teachers plan do not enable pupils to meet their targets. For example, in one such lesson the teacher wanted a pupil to anticipate what was going to happen next, but the activity to achieve this was inappropriate.
- On a few occasions, teaching assistants do not give pupils enough time or provide the resources for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to respond to questions. For example, they do not always consistently provide them with switches so that they can use their hands or roll over with their bodies to communicate a choice. On rare occasions, teaching assistants fail to push such pupils to do their best, showing them kindness rather than having high enough expectations for them. A few teachers are still coming to grips with using a newly introduced system of using information about such pupils to set them very small new steps of learning to work towards.

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

- Pupils enjoy learning because teachers remove obstacles that could interfere with their learning.

For example, they position pupils comfortably, when required, using specially adapted chairs so that they can reach the equipment they need to learn.

- Behaviour is good and pupils greet visitors warmly. Some sign 'Good morning', others say 'Hi' and a few, with a great sense of humour, reach out their hand and say 'Give it five'. Older pupils care for younger pupils with sensitivity.
- Incidents of exceptionally challenging behaviour are related to pupils' specific needs. For example, when some children first start at school they are frustrated because they cannot communicate. At first, they have no behavioural boundaries as a result. But as they learn to communicate, using signs, pictures and words, their behaviour improves significantly.
- Skilful management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders ensures that they are re-engaged with learning when they wander off task. Mostly, teaching assistants do this well. They work ceaselessly to avoid exposing such pupils to objects that are likely to distract them. Instead, they create learning environments free from such distractions. Only very occasionally does this go wrong.
- Pupils' knowledge of how bullying can occur using text messages and social network sites is good. At a level matched to their understanding, they know that discrimination based on disability and race is wrong. Rare instances of bullying that occur are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There are no racist incidents or fights.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They have an adult within school they trust and can talk with about anything that bothers them. Pupils with the most complex needs indicate through gesture who they want to help them with their personal care.
- Pupils are skilled at assessing risk for themselves. They know that they must wear a helmet and steel capped boots when working on a building site; that they must not run along the side of the swimming pool; and know that they must always carry garden tools with a sharp end pointed towards the ground.
- Attendance is average and improving. Absence is mostly related to off-site visits to specialist medical clinics. There is also an unusual practice of having to keep a few pupils on roll who have moved overseas and, as recognised by the school, this needs to be resolved with the local authority.

## **The leadership and management**

**are good**

- The headteacher with support from the deputy headteacher has been relentless and highly effective in her drive to improve teaching. In a short space of time, the very small amount of inadequate teaching present within the school when she took up post has been totally eradicated.
- The senior leadership team is not complacent and knows exactly where more work is required to improve teaching even further. Action has been taken to do just that, but it is too early to evaluate the full impact of actions taken.
- Tailored and targeted training is provided to develop individual teachers. Mostly, they respond exceptionally well. For example, the school's observations identified that a few teachers could be more effective in teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. They received training outside

of school and coaching within school. The learning behaviour and language development of pupils in their classes has improved significantly.

- Through the thorough analysis of its work, the school has an accurate understanding of what it does well and what areas are in need of improvement. It uses this analysis to improve. For example, evaluation of the teaching of reading revealed that it could be better. A new approach to reading was launched, teachers were trained, and pupils' reading has improved significantly as a result.
- The leadership and management of key stages, subjects and of very specific and tailored specialist programmes are good. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The leadership of the provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is outstanding, as is the leadership of the new provision (the life and employability skills programme) for students with moderate learning difficulties in the sixth form.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties lags a little behind that of provision for other special educational needs within the school. It is planned in the new management structure to make an appointment to improve the leadership of this aspect of the school's provision.
- The outreach team of teachers helps mainstream schools across Leicester City to meet the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders effectively. Thus, the school meets what is required of it as a specialist status school.
- Leaders ensure that the different groups of pupils receive equal chances to succeed and rigorously tackle any discrimination. But, very occasionally, opportunities to get the very best out of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are missed.
- Work with parents is good. Workshops support parents in managing their children's challenging behaviour and helping improve their communication skills. One parent wrote a letter of praise when after using a picture-based system (provided by the school) she heard her child say 'Mum' for the very first time in her life.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' deep reflection on children worse off than themselves has led to them raising funds for children in need. Links with a school in Nigeria, celebration of Islamic and Hindu festivals and visits to different places of worship (a mosque and a mandir) raise their awareness of cultural diversity.
- The local authority provides good support in helping the school to improve. It provides valuable training for governors and helps the school in its drive to improve teaching and raise pupils' attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body supports and challenges senior leaders effectively. Governors are skilled and equipped to carry out their roles. They have a good knowledge of how well all groups of pupils are doing because the senior leadership team shares pupils' progress data with them regularly. Governors also visit classes on a regular basis to see how well pupils are doing. They attend regular training courses to help them manage required change. Governors are actively involved in every aspect of the school's work. They know what works well and what could be better. They help the senior leaders to make vital improvements. They ask probing questions about how well the school is doing on a regular and frequent basis. They hone in on pupils' personal development and academic achievement and target the pupil premium



funding appropriately to raise pupils' achievement. Governors ensure that a robust policy links teachers' performance, based on how well they promote pupils' learning, to pay. They know about any underperformance in teaching and take decisive action in partnership with the senior leadership team to address it. The headteacher's performance is reviewed in accordance with regulations. Governors make sure that all 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131099
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	402443

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>	4-19
<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>	169
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Goodman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Hesketh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2856181
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