

The Meadows Sports College

Dudley Road East, Oldbury, B69 3BU

Inspection dates 6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make outstanding progress in communicating their needs and expressing choices independently.
- Parents are thrilled with the ways in which the school supports them with their children's development at home.
- Students develop good life skills such as using a picture shopping list to select groceries from the shelves in a supermarket and cooking a healthy and tasty meal.
- Progress in reading is outstanding because each student has a highly personalised reading programme.
- Students make good progress in writing and mathematics because these are taught well.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and gain the qualifications required to join suitable college courses or community placements when they leave.
- Behaviour is outstanding and students learn how to keep themselves safe.
- All leaders, including governors, are meticulous in checking the quality of teaching and provide extensive ongoing training for teachers. This enables them to improve how they teach, raises students' achievement and supports school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few teachers spend too much time explaining to students what it is they are meant to learn and this slows the progress these students make.
- Opportunities are occasionally missed during massage sessions to promote students' learning and physical development.
- A few staff do not get students with autistic spectrum disorders ready to learn quickly enough at the start of lessons.
- The school lacks a suitable space or room with specialist equipment to support staff with the techniques required to calm students with complex autistic spectrum disorders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by nine different teachers and a higher level teaching assistant. Seven of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors heard students read from different disability and special educational needs groups. They looked at their work when observing lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, students (supported by staff), governors and an external consultant purchased by the local authority to support the school.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including statements of special educational needs, feeding plans, care plans, students' progress data, attendance data, the school's improvement plan, monitoring of teaching information, the appraisal policy, all safeguarding documents and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors examined 36 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with 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.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David King

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school makes provision for students with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A significant number of students with severe learning difficulties also have autistic spectrum disorders. Some students have very complex medical needs and a few have hearing and/or visual impairment. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Although called a sports college, the school does not have specialist status for sport.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision: the vocational courses are taught on site.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families where English is an additional language, are above average. These students are represented across all of the different disability and special educational needs groups in the school.
- An above average proportion of students are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is extra government funding for children looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.

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 ensuring that:
 - teachers do not take too long to explain to students what they are expected to do in lessons and so sustain a good pace of learning at all times
 - teachers use their knowledge of what is required to improve students' learning and physical development during massage sessions so as to challenge them to use their feet and hands to operate switches and explore objects.
- Improve provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders by:
 - ensuring all teachers are trained and supported in implementing the physical activities required to calm students with autistic spectrum disorders at the start of lessons so that they become ready to learn as quickly as possible
 - working in an effective partnership with the local authority to fund a suitable room equipped with specialist resources to achieve this.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Measured from their various starting points, students in the sixth form make good progress in English and mathematics. As they read pictorial shopping lists to select items from the shelves in a supermarket, pay at the till and wait for change, they gain confidence as young adults.
- All sixth form students gain an ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualification in 'Personal Progress' at a level appropriate for them. This enables them to go to college or secure a community placement when they leave school.
- The most able Year 11 and sixth form students gain Entry Level 2 qualifications in performing arts and information and communication technology and Entry Level 3 qualifications in catering and horticulture.
- Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, students whatever their disability or special educational needs, make outstanding progress in communicating their needs and making choices using gesture, signs, pictures, switches and spoken words. Students' communication, numeracy and problem-solving skills are well developed across subjects.
- Students' progress in reading is outstanding. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties anticipate what is going to happen when a water spray is held close to their face during sensory story time. Positioned comfortably, they gaze at the pictures in big story books. More-able students read their picture communication passports to make choices for themselves. The most-able students with severe learning difficulties read simple text and, with helpful picture prompts, work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Progress in writing is good. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties find writing difficult. However, with fingers rubbed and hands stretched to improve their flexibility, they begin to make marks using 'gloop' (messy substances). Those with severe learning difficulties use computer-assisted symbol programs to write simple sentences. The most-able students write sentences of their choosing independently using a pencil, spelling words reasonably accurately and using simple punctuation.
- All students make good progress in mathematics. Those with the most complex needs experience working with one object and then more. They experience numbers being counted out by their teacher while they bounce on the trampoline (rebound therapy). Students with severe learning difficulties use a basic calculator to add and take away, handle simple units of money and use clocks to read half past the hour (a few reading a quarter past).
- Specialist equipment and careful positioning enables students with sight and/or hearing impairment to achieve as well as their classmates. Students make good progress towards their non-academic targets such as establishing better sleep patterns and improving their independence in feeding. When a few students with complex medical conditions begin to slip backwards, they receive intensive physiotherapy in order to achieve all they can.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to increase the rate of progress for children looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Consequently, they achieve as well as their classmates in English and mathematics. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families who speak English as an additional language, receive focused support in accordance with their needs. They make the same good progress as

other students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and there are pockets of outstanding teaching across all subjects. The teaching of reading is consistently outstanding. Each student has a personal reading plan and all students are consistently challenged to improve their reading.
- The development of students' communication skills lies at the heart of every classroom activity. Flexible use of a wide range of communication techniques and creative resources enables all students to communicate their needs very effectively and in a comfortable way. In the same class, one student will say 'yes' by eye pointing; another will use a switch; and yet another will vocalise.
- Teaching of life skills, particularly throughout Years 10 to 14, is good. Creative activities and suitable resources enable students to use a kettle and a toaster (under staff supervision), strip a bed and use a washing machine.
- There is some inspirational teaching. Such teaching was observed in a literacy lesson for Key Stage 3 students with severe learning difficulties and in a music lesson for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In both lessons, each student had a specific learning outcome to reach based on what they needed to learn. Activities and resources were tailored to enable each student to succeed, and their progress was outstanding in both lessons.
- Typically, teachers have high expectations and use questions to deepen students' understanding. They give students plenty of time to respond to their questions and access to a wide range of resources to communicate their answers. In almost all lessons, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning. Relationships in such lessons are outstanding. Consequently, students (particularly those with autistic spectrum disorders) become less anxious about making a mistake and often excel with their learning.
- Occasionally, teachers take too long explaining to students what they need to do in lessons. This slows their learning. Sometimes, therapeutic sessions do not focus enough on students' learning needs. For example, a calming and relaxing massage session for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties failed to challenge students who were aware that their feet and hands belonged to their bodies to reach out towards using a switch to turn off the 'foot massage bath' with their toes or explore an object with their hands.
- A few staff are too slow in getting students with complex autistic spectrum disorders ready to learn at the start of lessons. They are not sufficiently skilled in using the particular physical sensations (such as 'gentle rocking' or 'encouraging the student to make a large movement of the arm as if painting using a big stroke with a paintbrush') required to calm the students and focus their attention. They do not have a room with specialist equipment for this purpose.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students enjoy school and teachers are skilled at removing obstacles that interfere with their learning. This enables them to engage with the challenging and interesting activities that the school provides.
- Staff position students comfortably so that they are able to use the equipment they need to

learn. Similarly, teachers sit students with autistic spectrum disorders away from areas or resources in the classroom that are likely to distract them. When these students wander off task, teachers quickly re-engage them with learning.

- Behaviour is outstanding. There have been no recorded bullying or racist incidents. Rare instances of challenging behaviour are related to students' particular difficulties. When they occur, they are dealt with swiftly.
- This is a calm school where students relate exceptionally well with one another and with staff. The most-able older students look out for any student who may be alone during lunch time and involve them in purposeful games in the playground.
- Students who speak using words say that they are happy and feel safe at school. They say, 'We trust (naming a particular teaching assistant or teacher) and can talk with her or him about what makes us sad.' Students with the most complex needs use gesture to communicate who they want to meet their intimate care needs.
- Students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe is outstanding. The most-able students know how to carry garden tools safely. They understand that they must press the button to cross the road at a zebra crossing, and put a 'special hat' on before riding a bike. Their awareness of being careful about taking medicines is exceptional.
- Attendance is average. It has improved year on year over the past three years because the school has become increasingly skilled in meeting students' medical needs on site. Absence is mostly related to lengthy stays in hospital.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team led by a dedicated Principal has been relentless and highly effective in its drive to improve teaching. The amount of good or outstanding teaching has almost doubled over the last three years. The Principal, supported by the governors, has not shied away from tackling inadequate teaching.
- Targeted training is provided to improve the work of individual teachers. For example, the school's recent lesson observations identified that a few teachers could provide more challenge when teaching students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They received training and the level of challenge for students in their classes is now good.
- The school analyses its work thoroughly and has an accurate picture of what it does well and what needs further improvement. It uses this analysis to get better. For example, evaluation of reading scores revealed that students could do better in reading. A new approach to reading was put in place, teachers were trained, and students now make outstanding progress in reading.
- Overall, the leadership and management of key stages, subjects and specialist programmes are good. The leadership of communication and reading is outstanding. Outdoor learning opportunities, including in the spectacular outdoor classrooms created by the Principal, are inspirational. Students gaze with amazement at the water features and colourful bushes; their curiosity is aroused by a fascinating range of sounds as they learn in the school's beautiful sensory gardens.
- Although good, the leadership of the provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders lags slightly behind that of other disability groups represented in the school. Furthermore, a few

teachers and teaching assistants have not had enough training in applying physical sensation techniques to sufficiently calm these students at the start of all lessons.

- Leaders ensure that the different groups of students receive equal chances to succeed and rigorously tackle any discrimination. There is no discernible difference in the rate of progress between the different groups of students.
- Work with parents is good. It ranges from providing symbol cards to support them in calming their children at bedtime to adapting furniture for them to improve their children's independent mobility and supporting them in developing their children's independent feeding skills.
- Subjects, topics and special events meet students' learning needs well throughout the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. With prompts, students have been encouraged to reflect on children, in a part of Africa, worse off than they are. They have raised funds for these children. Celebration of Islamic and Hindu festivals, visits to different places of worship and learning to speak French raise students' awareness of cultural diversity.
- The local authority buys in specialist consultancy support to help the school. This has led to improvements in the school's assessment procedures and the training of subject leaders.
- The governance of the school:
 - The governing body challenges and supports senior leaders effectively. Governors have a good knowledge of how well all groups of students are doing because the senior leadership team shares students' progress data with them. Governors attend regular training courses run by the local authority to equip them with the skills required to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Governors know what is going well and what could be better in the school. They are involved in evaluating the school's performance and in whole school improvement planning. They ask probing questions of the Principal. Governors ensure that spending, including that of pupil premium funding, is targeted appropriately to raise students' achievement. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and ensure that a robust policy links teachers' performance, based on how well they promote learning, to pay. The Principal's performance is reviewed in accordance with regulations, and governors ensure 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

Unique reference number	132231
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	402551

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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Slater
Headteacher	Gordon Phillips (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	0121 5697080
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