

Great Arley School

Holly Road, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4HH

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils make good progress from low and sometimes, very low starting points, because adults quickly build excellent and supportive relationships which help pupils to make strides in their learning. Achievement is equally good across all key stages.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well because teachers accurately assess progress. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to achieve their next steps.
- The high number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are provided with additional support to ensure they are able to make the best progress they can.
- Pupils' communication skills develop exceptionally well. They are able to express their views and explain what they are learning with confidence.
- Pupils with the most complex needs are provided with sensitive support in group settings which ensure their learning needs are well met.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe in school. The excellent relationships they enjoy with staff ensure they can share any concerns and be confident they will be dealt with.
- The school is well led and managed. Relatively recent changes in management are now settling down. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the steps needed so that this is an improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, work provided does not always enable individual pupils of differing abilities to make the best possible progress they can.
- Occasionally, teachers spend too much time on whole-class teaching with not enough time for independent work.
- Senior leaders and governors do not have a clear analysis of the progress of different pupil groups and subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. Two lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- On the second day of the inspection, the school welcomed many visitors to its 50th birthday celebration. The lead inspector met with groups of visitors, including parents, partners from other agencies and schools, support staff, teachers and managers and the school's local authority advisor.
- A meeting was held with four members of the governing body.
- Many discussions were held formally and informally with pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, including work submitted for accreditation last year.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be considered. The inspectors took into account the views of parents expressed in the school's own recent survey. Twenty two staff questionnaires were returned.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents relating to matters such as school self-evaluation and development planning, intervention programmes, curriculum enrichment, pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marylin Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school takes pupils who have a range of complex learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs. Almost half of pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Other main groups include pupils with autism spectrum conditions, speech, language and communication needs and a small proportion of pupils with more severe learning difficulties or physical disabilities. Almost all pupils have additional needs. An increasing number of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are being admitted to the school.
- Almost half of pupils receive additional government funding known as the pupil premium, because they are eligible for free school meals. A small minority of pupils who are looked after children or children of armed services families are also eligible for the pupil premium.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- Pupils are drawn from across the Wyre and Fylde area and many travel long distances to school.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing, including in the leadership team.
- At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the school and local authority have no plans to admit children to this stage for the foreseeable future.
- Year 10 and 11 students can access courses at Blackpool and Fylde College and Myerscough College for half a day a week but these were not running at the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - always providing tasks and activities which are well-matched to the ability of individual pupils
 - spending more lesson time on individual and group learning and less on whole-class teaching.
- Ensure leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, are able to scrutinise the progress of groups of pupils more effectively, by quickly developing the systems needed for whole-school data analysis.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils enter the school at different ages and stages of their education. Some pupils arrive at the school after poor experiences in other settings but they quickly settle into the warm atmosphere of the school and progress begins to accelerate.
- Pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has taken effective action to address a weakness in reading and pupils can demonstrate a good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to read a range of materials. They use their word-building skills to produce writing of a good standard.
- Mathematical skills are practised in a range of real life settings, such as weighing ingredients to make jam tarts or measuring acrylic to make picture frames.
- Pupils make huge gains in overcoming their communication difficulties because of the exceptional support provided. They make significant strides in their personal development. Pupils express their views with confidence and know how to gather evidence to support their views. For example, pupils put together a very effective case for changing the school uniform and members of the school council gave a presentation to senior leaders and governors.
- There are no differences overall in the progress from their starting points of pupils with different special educational needs, because every pupil is treated as an individual. Usually tasks and activities are given which are ambitious and stretch individual pupils but, occasionally, progress is hampered when the work required is the same for all.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to provide those pupils who are eligible with additional one-to-one or small group support where necessary, so that they do just as well as other pupils. Teachers monitor individual pupils' progress very well to make sure this is the case.
- Pupils leave school with awards which match and reflect their abilities and prepare them well for the next stage in their education. The school continually reviews the range of awards it offers so that different groups of pupils have equal opportunity to enjoy success.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations for what individual pupils can achieve. In a Key Stage 4 science lesson, the teacher organised practical experiments to test the strength of concrete which pupils had made in a previous lesson and helped them to develop an understanding of scientific processes.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and share their enthusiasm and love of their subjects with the pupils. In a Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils learned a great deal about Kenyan culture, because the teacher had planned a range of activities to capture their interest, including dressing up in ethnic clothing and jewellery, making African huts and comparing shopping in Kenyan villages to this country. Providing such practical experiences helps pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well.
- Where teaching is less effective, it is sometimes because there is too much time spent on whole-class teaching, which restricts the amount of time pupils have to work individually or in groups at their own level.
- The special groups for pupils with the most complex needs provide topics and tasks which are well-matched to enable them to make equally good progress from their starting points.
- The additional help provided to those who are not making expected progress and to those eligible for pupil premium funding, ensures they make rapid strides in their basic skills. Teachers plan lessons which bring the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to life, such as counting the legs on creatures and, for the more able in the class, using algebra for their answers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together as effective teams. They prepare

pupils well for their move on to the next phase in their education by offering a curriculum which is relevant to their age and stage of learning, focusing on developing the independent learning skills they will need in the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils say they love coming to school and parents have every confidence that their children are safe and enjoy school. This is demonstrated by the fact that attendance levels are high.
- Pupils clearly show their pride in their school and in their achievements. During the inspection, pupils escorted visitors around school, courteously answering questions in a very mature manner, served coffee and performed in the choir during the 50th birthday celebrations.
- Behaviour during lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils who may have occasional difficulties in class because of their learning needs are managed extremely well so that behaviour does not disrupt other pupils' learning. Senior leaders are aware that the pupil population is changing and are taking steps to ensure staff have the skills to manage the different needs so that temporary exclusions are very rare.
- Parents, staff and pupils all say that bullying hardly ever happens. Pupils know and understand about bullying in its various forms. The mutually respectful relationships they enjoy with adults give them the confidence to know any incidents will be dealt with swiftly. The school works hard to help pupils and parents understand the dangers of internet bullying.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through all subjects in a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to take responsibility for themselves, for others and for their school community with roles such as eco-warriors, school councillors and by earning house points so that they and others in their 'house' can enjoy rewards.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has gone through a period of significant change since the previous inspection. Leaders and managers at all levels in the school are relatively new to their roles and developing their leadership skills. Nevertheless, staff, parents and pupils are clearly confident that the school is well-led and managed.
- The local authority provides expert support, both in terms of financial management and to support the senior leaders and governing body.
- Senior and middle leaders have evaluated their own and the school's performance very well and have a clear understanding of the steps needed to improve the quality of teaching further, through even more rigorous monitoring and sharing of best practice. Performance-management procedures are now well in place. A difficult financial situation last year meant some staff were unable to attend external training for their professional development but priorities for the school are always supported.
- School development planning has improved since the previous inspection. There is a clear focus on actions to raise standards with timescales to monitor and achieve targets.
- Data analysis is not yet securely in place. Individual pupils' progress is monitored very well within classes and by key stage leaders but senior leaders and governors are not able to scrutinise whole-school data effectively enough to be sure about the performance of different groups in the school.
- The curriculum is very good. Subjects, topics and courses match pupils' needs, interests and abilities very well. Subject specialists provide expert knowledge, for example in art, design technology, music, science and food technology. Additionally, partnerships with local colleges provide access to other subjects which older pupils may want to follow in their continuing education.
- Partnerships with parents are very strong. Parents feel well-informed about what their children

are learning. They enjoy receiving the 'Friday Flyer' and feel they can approach the staff for help and support at home when necessary.

- Great Arley School is a very happy place where all staff work well as a team to meet the needs of its pupils and provide them with rich experiences. There is a shared desire for improvement which will serve the school well in the future.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- As with the senior leadership team, there have been recent changes to membership of the governing body and there are a few vacancies to be filled. The Acting Chair and a core of highly competent governors, have the skills and knowledge to carry out their duties very effectively. A review of roles and responsibilities is being undertaken as new governors are recruited. Governors have worked with the local authority and senior leaders to secure financial stability for the school. They have ensured that additional funding, such as the pupil premium is used well for its purpose. They have agreed spending for the small amount of additional physical education funding the school will receive. Governors oversee the performance-management process and ensure pay progression is linked to good performance. The governing body receives information about pupils' progress but does not yet have the analysis needed to scrutinise achievement effectively enough. Safeguarding, safe recruitment issues and health and safety are always a priority and these requirements are met very well.

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	119878
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426200

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maria Townsend (Acting)
Headteacher	Anne Marshfield
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2011
Telephone number	01253 821072
Fax number	01253 865073
Email address	head@greatarley.lancs.sch.uk

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