

# Nether Hall School

Netherhall Road, Leicester, LE5 1DT

**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2014

<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

- The school is a positive and enjoyable place of learning for pupils and staff.
- All groups of pupils achieve well because staff have high expectations of them and sensitively challenge them all to do and learn as much as possible. They find, focus and build on pupils' abilities, enabling them all to achieve well.
- Teaching is imaginative and creative. Staff plan and prepare lessons carefully. They successfully adapt activities, making them accessible to each pupil.
- Staff and pupils are happy. Relationships are excellent. Staff know and care for pupils extremely well; consequently they are very safe.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff are sensitive to children's needs and provide a wide range of suitable activities to help them learn and develop.
- The sixth form is good. Opportunities for students to use and extend their skills in practical real-life situations, including cooking and work experience, are effective.
- Behaviour is good. Any challenging behaviour or anxieties are managed extremely well and the ethos of the school is calm and settled.
- Leadership, including governance, is successfully shared and delegated. All the leaders have a clear role and focus. They also work well together, successfully driving a range of improvements, including those in teaching and achievement.
- Teamwork is strong. Everyone, including the site manager, business manager and office staff, play a significant part in the school's success.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress and behaviour dip when pupils have to wait for too long. The achievement, effort, attitudes and interest of some pupils and the quality of teaching declines at these times.
- Leaders have not done enough to overcome dips in learning in whole-class sessions when pupils have to wait too long.
- Equipment to support pupils' communication, including symbols, is not always easily available throughout the school, such as in the dining hall. This reduces opportunities for pupils to use and extend some forms of communication

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 18 lessons or part-lessons were observed, 17 of them jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with parents, carers, pupils, governors, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- The number of responses to the online Parent View questionnaire was too few to reveal results. Inspectors received the views of parents and carers through 42 responses to a recent school survey and informal discussions.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff through 67 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s information on pupils’ current progress, pupils’ work, school development plans, monitoring activities, documents relating to safeguarding and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- All the pupils have, or are being assessed for, statements of special educational needs. All the pupils have either profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. About a quarter of the pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders. Many have physical and or sensory impairment. About a quarter are visually impaired.
- Over three quarters of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Almost half are of Indian heritage. Most pupils are at early stages of spoken language. Over half speak English as an additional language.
- At just over a third, the proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is slightly above the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of pupils, in this case, those who are looked after by the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A very few pupils are registered part-time at the school and part-time at Hope Hamilton mainstream school. All other pupils, including those in the sixth form, are full-time at the school.
- The proportion of pupils who start at the school after the Reception class is much higher than in most other schools. There are currently very few pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The deputy headteacher started at the school in August 2013.
- The school is due to move to a new building, currently under construction, in October 2014.
- Along with several other special schools, Nether Hall School is now part of the Well Trust. It is not an academy and is still funded by, and accountable to, the local authority.

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

- Improve achievement, behaviour and teaching, by making sure that pupils do not have to wait too long in lessons.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop communication, by making sure that equipment to support this, including symbols and pictures, are easily accessible around the school.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels identify any times when engagement and learning dip so that they can address improve these effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils, throughout the school, achieve well in English, mathematics and personal and social development. Progress in communication and early cognitive skills is also good.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons because most activities are interesting and because staff adapt activities so well to make sure they are suitable for each pupil's needs. However, there are times when the quality of teaching dips slightly and progress slows.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well, because activities are very suitable for them. These are engaging and varied. During the inspection, children made good progress in physical development, language, mathematics and social skills, as staff helped small groups play and make castles in large sand trays.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used for additional resources for reading and communication and additional one-to-one support for reading. This is used well to increase pupils' progress.
- Students in the sixth form make particularly good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, because they are keen to learn and feel very safe with staff and each other. In one class, more-able students were highly motivated to write down ingredients which they needed for cooking. They had chosen what they wanted to make and were eager to show this to others.
- At the end of Year 11, all the pupils stay on to the sixth form. They start accredited courses in life-skills, which prepare them well for college at the end of Year 14. These include a wide range of work experiences, which are carefully matched with pupils' interests, skills and aptitudes in close discussion with students and families. They all go on to further education when they leave.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, because communication has a high priority in all lessons and so many activities are visual and practical.
- Pupil-premium funding is used well to extend the experiences of eligible pupils and supplement resources. Although numbers in each cohort are too small to report on, there are no significant differences in the achievement of these pupils and others.
- The most-able pupils achieve well because their strengths are identified and built upon. For example, as soon as any pupils show an interest in, and awareness of print, they are given additional one-to-one reading lessons to extend and develop this skill.
- Leaders have carefully considered how best to use the primary school sport funding. They have discussed this with other schools and are considering working together. Some money will go towards equipment in the new school and some is already going towards additional sports coaches. Pupils enjoy physical development and make good progress in sports leaders' programmes.
- The number of pupils at the school who are also registered elsewhere is too small to report on.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Staff plan and prepare lessons well. They are particularly creative in adapting resources and approaches so that these are suitable for, and accessible to, all the pupils. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, including visual impairments, looked at lights, felt the warmth of heat pads and smelt herbs in a science lesson on growth.
- The quality of teaching, rates of progress and pupils' engagement and interest dip, when pupils have to wait too long. Examples of this include waiting for a turn to use particular resources in physical education lessons, or if there are too many pupils in one group. Although waiting for a turn and sharing are important social skills, learning slows when this is prolonged.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and integral to lessons. They play valuable roles in pupils' learning and provide essential one-to-one support. An excellent example of this was when teaching assistants used a range of resources, including water, wellington boots and an umbrella to illustrate a story for pupils with highly complex disabilities. Pupils were eager and engrossed. They showed initiative and made choices.
- Phonics (the sounds which letters make) is taught well throughout the school. All the staff are well trained and pupils have good opportunities to develop their enjoyment, understanding and skills in literacy. Mathematics is taught well through a range of activities and lessons such as sand play, cooking and physical education.
- Communication is taught well in classes and individually. Pupils are motivated by positive relationships and interesting activities. Their progress is not always as good as it could be however, because additional resources, such as symbols, are not easily accessible around the school.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, because staff provide a broad range of activities and opportunities to extend all areas of development.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. It focuses on life skills and provides effective preparation for later life, including college. As far as possible, students develop independence and social skills. They are keen to learn, determined and resilient.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form, are happy, enthusiastic and keen to learn. Relationships are excellent. There is a very positive ethos with lots of well-earned praise and laughter throughout the school. Staff set an excellent example, they are positive, caring and diligent in all they do.
- Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. Staff know pupils well and are highly sensitive to their individual needs, characters and moods. They identify any potential anxiety or disruptions and respond quickly, so that these are addressed and reduced. Outbursts and volatile behaviour are rare and the school is settled and calm.
- There are marked improvements in pupils with the most challenging behaviour. Several pupils, who have had difficult starts at other schools, settle quickly and behave well at Nether Hall. Clear consistent routines, excellent relationships, skilled behaviour management and high expectations from staff, all contribute to this success.

- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. As far as possible, students make choices and take initiative and responsibility for their work and actions. They are positive, kind, considerate and helpful to others.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils' focus and interest wanes when they have to wait too long. Staff do not act quickly enough at these times to maintain engagement and make the most of behaviour, teaching or achievement.
- Attendance is improving, but remains low because some pupils have particularly poor health and some take extended holiday during term times. There are no exclusions.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All staff are very well-trained in safeguarding and child protection. This is updated formally each year. Systems to identify, record, monitor and address any safeguarding or protection issues are meticulous.
- Staff very carefully adhere to and teach pupils about safety in lessons. For example, a teaching assistant carefully explained about positioning hot pans when cooking, so that they are not accidentally knocked off.
- Information about individual pupils' strengths, personalities and needs are very detailed and prominent. Staff use these diligently to identify and address needs as they arise.
- Parents, carers, staff and pupils are all positive about safety. Links with families are good, providing staff with an even greater understanding of individual pupils' strengths and challenges.
- Due to their profound learning difficulties, pupils' knowledge about different forms of bullying is limited. Pupils who are able to, have a growing awareness of potential dangers and how to keep themselves and others safe.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Leaders are positive, supportive and outward looking. They are eager for staff to develop and share what they learn, in order to strengthen others. Some teaching assistants have trained to become teachers. Some teachers have developed their skills through post-graduate diplomas and other training. Effective training helps the teaching, positive attitudes and achievement of all.
- The headteacher has a good understanding of teaching and achievement and successfully explains this to others. The new deputy headteacher has quickly gained knowledge about all the staff and pupils in the school. Along with the headteacher, she has a clear vision for improvement.
- Teamwork is strong. Everyone, including the site manager, business manager and office staff play a significant part in the school's success. Staff enjoy their work, the school and the pupils. All 67 responses to the inspection questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- School morale is very positive. Staff enjoy their work very much and support each other strongly. There is a lot of fun and laughter. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have a growing awareness of right and wrong, and of the natural, social and cultural world around them. They use their different senses to learn about and explore the

world around them. This makes the school dynamic and vibrant.

- Pupils of all ages have broad, suitable and appropriate opportunities for learning. There are frequent trips and visits out, including visits to a temple, mosque and theatre, which help pupils enjoy school, apply their learning in real-life contexts and help prepare them all for later life and learning.
- Leadership is shared and distributed well. Subject leaders take an active part in school development. They observe lessons, look at plans and pupils' work and help drive improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Leaders manage teaching well. They have strengthened many areas, including the use of resources and the role of the teaching assistant since the previous inspection. They check teaching frequently and carefully. However, they have not done enough to tackle dips when pupils have to occasionally wait for too long.
- The sixth form and Early Years Foundation Stages are both led well. The use of accreditations to shape teaching in the sixth form has developed since the previous inspection. This provides an effective route for later life and learning at college, which students and their families are advised and guided in. The Early Years coordinator ensures that children have very broad opportunities to learn and develop in all the required areas, teaching here is good and children achieve well.
- Affiliation to the Well Trust has been valuable for leaders, staff and governors. Partnership with other schools has provided both support and challenge, such as additional comparisons for teaching and achievement.
- Local authority advisers play a positive part in the school and its development. They have been particularly helpful in providing networks with other schools, ensuring that evaluations and lesson observations are accurate, training governors and preparing for the inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and rates of achievement throughout the school. This is through visits, detailed reports and discussions.
  - Governors manage the performance of staff, including the headteacher, well. They support and challenge leaders and teachers, ensuring that there is a strong focus on progress, no underperformance from staff and that all groups of pupils achieve well.
  - They ensure that financial incentives for teachers are used well as a reward for positive outcomes. Along with other leaders in the school, they are currently reviewing pay scales of teaching assistants and are keen to recognise and reward them too.
  - Governors manage finance well. They have a good understanding of how additional funding, including pupil premium funding, is used. They are vigilant in ensuring that outcomes from it are good.
  - Governors carry out all their statutory duties effectively and well. These include those for safeguarding.

## 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>	120361
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	431175

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Adrian Keene
<b>Headteacher</b>	Erica Dennies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 241 7258
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