

# Walton Leigh School

Queen's Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 5AB

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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 because:

- Teaching is always at least good and often outstanding. This ensures that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their pupils' abilities. Their assessment of pupils' progress is a strength of the school and enables them to challenge the pupils to make the best progress they can.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The provision made for sixth formers, within mixed-age classes, enables them to progress as rapidly as their younger classmates. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, make outstanding progress in early literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils are constantly encouraged to communicate with adults and other pupils, whether in speech or by the use of symbols and word-picture systems, enabling them to make rapid progress in learning letters, words and numbers.
- The pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the foundation of the curriculum. The school is a happy, friendly and harmonious place of learning.
- The pupils behave extremely well. They feel safe at school, as their parents confirm. Their attitudes to their learning are excellent and most pupils have high levels of attendance. This has a significant positive impact on their learning.
- The headteacher leads an outstanding team of senior staff. Together, they rigorously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the pupils' progress and they inspire their staff to strive to help each pupil achieve as well as possible.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed about the progress of pupils and the standards of teaching. They provide a very strong level of support and challenge to the school's leadership.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have been very effective in sustaining and enhancing pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with teachers, middle and senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors looked at the school's own surveys of parental opinion.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors looked at records of pupils' progress and behaviour since the previous inspection, as well as monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and records of pupils' achievement in reaching personal development and academic targets. The pupils' attendance records were scrutinised, as were all procedures relating to the safeguarding of the pupils.

## Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with severe, profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The number eligible for the pupil premium, awarded for pupils entitled to free school meals or in the care of the local authority is close to the national average.
- About one third of the pupils are girls.
- The great majority of pupils are White British, with a minority from other ethnic groups, reflecting the make up of the local authority. A few pupils speak English as an additional language and there is a very small number who are in the care of the local authority.
- Pupils in the sixth form are taught within groups that cover the 14 to 19 age range.

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

- Enable pupils to maintain their outstanding progress by:
  - Ensuring consistency in planning activities so that the pace of lessons maintains pupils' interest and concentration.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The attainment of pupils remains low because of their severe and complex learning difficulties; but, from these starting points, the pupils make sustained and often rapid progress throughout the school, including the sixth form. Almost every pupil achieves at rates expected nationally in similar schools, and the great majority exceed these levels of progress, irrespective of their disabilities or individual special educational needs. All groups perform equally well, including boys and girls and those from different ethnic groups.
- The pupils entitled to Year 7 catch-up funding and those entitled to the pupil premium funding make outstanding progress, in line with other pupils. This is due to the school's well judged use of the funding, for instance in music therapy and after-school clubs where communication is reinforced and enhanced. The attainment levels of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding at the end of Year 11 are similar to their classmates in both English and mathematics.
- Through the school's outstanding assessment procedures, the performance of each pupil is tracked continually. No pupil is allowed to fall behind and teachers ensure that pupils learn at the best pace possible towards the challenging targets they are set. There is no discrimination and the school makes sure that the equal opportunities of all pupils are at the heart of its work.
- Rapid progress in English and mathematics is maintained through the school. Teachers constantly emphasise communication skills, whether in speech, word and symbols together or in picture exchange systems. As a result, the pupils learn to express their wishes, to respond to others and, in some cases, to recognise letters, words and numbers. For example, through the well planned use of song, visual illustration and appropriate questions, pupils in a Years 7 to 9 class made excellent progress in recognising numbers to 10 and consolidated this in groups by the use of symbols and pictures.
- The outstanding use of communication techniques in every lesson means that, while the pupils make excellent progress in every subject of the curriculum, they continually practise their early literacy and numeracy skills throughout each activity. Older pupils, including sixth formers, apply these skills in a wide range of practical and vocationally oriented activities. They make excellent progress in basic skills, which leads to nationally recognised qualifications and also in using their communication skills to develop other aspects of their learning. This gives them self-confidence and prepares them very well for the next stage in their education.
- The highly effective use of these communication techniques enables the most able pupils in the school to make extremely rapid progress, in line with their peers.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The well established and rigorous monitoring by senior staff, and on occasion by the local authority, have been central to the consistent rise in teaching standards since the previous inspection. This has been accompanied by high levels of focused training and support for all staff. Teaching, as a result, is at least good, with much that is outstanding. This has a significant impact on the pupils' excellent progress.
- Pupils across the school, and particularly in the 14 to 19 age range, are grouped according to their individual learning needs. The teaching of pupils with severe learning difficulties and with added autistic spectrum conditions is outstanding. Pupils made exemplary progress in their communication in a Years 10 to 14 lesson by using picture exchange to indicate their choices of colours and materials in working on their 'animals' project. Pupils with profound and complex needs, through sensitive individual interaction with adults, make very good progress in responding to sensory experiences. These different groups achieve high order skills as a result of the highly skilled teaching provided.
- Teachers know their pupils very well. They maintain exceptionally detailed records of every small step in their progress. The quality of this assessment is fundamental in ensuring every

pupil, including the most able, is given work which is challenging throughout the curriculum and promotes excellent achievement, but never overwhelms pupils with activities which are beyond them. Adults have high expectations of their pupils' success. This ensures that pupils stay engaged in their learning and maintain their concentration and effort. On a very few occasions, however, teachers do not plan thoroughly enough to ensure the pace of learning is sustained throughout the lesson. This can sometimes lead to pupils losing concentration and can slow down the rate of learning.

- The pupils receive a very high level of individual tuition and support. Teachers and well trained learning assistants continually interact with each pupil. They constantly check each pupil's understanding throughout the lesson by careful questioning. They model speech very well and make excellent use of symbols, pictures and, in some groups, objects of reference. The pupils are always made aware of how well they have done and how they can take the next step to make their work better. Adults are skilled in reappraising learning and adapting activities in lessons to enable pupils to make even faster progress.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Apart from a minority with chronic medical conditions, their attendance is high and there are very few absences. The pupils love school, seen by their smiles when they arrive each morning; they have excellent relationships with adults and other pupils. As one pupil commented, 'This school's fantastic. We learn so much, it's brilliant.'
- Parents and staff confirm the happy and harmonious atmosphere of the school. When on occasion a child becomes distressed and behaviour becomes challenging, it is dealt with professionally and sensitively by well trained staff and is never allowed to disrupt learning. The pupils typically enjoy every second of their day. They have exemplary attitudes to their activities, whether in the classroom or in the many extra experiences provided for them.
- The management of behaviour is excellent. The school's detailed records demonstrate how incidents are rare and diminishing, and also show how thoroughly incidents are investigated and how promptly interventions are put in place to support the pupils. Where individually tailored behaviour plans are felt necessary, these are scrupulously and regularly monitored, with the well-being of the pupil always the priority. The staff are very successful in ensuring every pupil has his or her needs met and makes equally good progress.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of the pupils is a foundation of the school's curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to reflect on and experience spiritual and moral values, in displays, assemblies and visits to religious buildings and places of beauty. For instance, at the time of the inspection, a group of older pupils had just returned from a skiing trip in the Alps. Pupils reflect, each afternoon, before they go home, on the day's events, and the school is characterised by calm tolerance and understanding of the needs of others. Adults are skilled in modelling appropriate behaviour and in teaching the pupils about positive behaviour and the differences between right and wrong conduct.
- As a result, pupils feel very safe. The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There have been no bullying incidents for a long period; pupils look forward to seeing their classmates and adults. Over time, the pupils learn to keep themselves safe and to appreciate dangerous situations. The high priority given to their personal development and well-being ensures pupils learn acceptable and safe behaviour in a variety of social situations.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- There has been consistent improvement in pupils' achievement and personal development, and in teaching, from already high levels, since the previous inspection. This is because of outstanding leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy and by middle leaders, who together have had a significant impact on improving standards. All staff are committed to the pursuit of excellence. Morale is very high. Staff are fully involved in

development planning and review.

- The local authority has full confidence in the school's leadership and maintains a light touch overview of provision because of the school's very high quality self-evaluation and improvement strategies. The school has an excellent track record of improvement over many years, particularly in the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievement. There is an outstanding capacity to maintain this improvement.
- Self-evaluation procedures are highly effective. The work of each teacher is robustly and regularly reviewed, a process which teachers find constructive and positive. Leaders have a relentless approach to maintaining and continually improving teaching standards. Teachers' performance is monitored and managed very successfully and their performance is linked clearly to salary progression and levels of responsibility. Staff are very well supported through further training and support, for instance in all areas of child protection, as well as in developing high order skills in teaching autistic pupils or those with complex needs.
- The curriculum is outstanding. Activities in Years 7 to 9 are very carefully adapted from National Curriculum programmes so that each pupil may learn at their optimum individual pace. Older pupils in the 14 to 19 age group follow a varied range of activities, which successfully promotes and integrates basic skills in all their learning. The pupils enjoy substantial choice and flexibility in their work, which covers vocational, and life-skills experiences as well as a choice of leisure pursuits.
- Every pupil in recent years has been successful in gaining appropriate accreditation in a range of experiences, including those which celebrate their personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares pupils very well for the next stage in their education. Every pupil goes on successfully into further education, social care or residential colleges.
- Safeguarding arrangements at the school are outstanding and fully meet statutory requirements. Parents praise the quality of the school's communication with them and they have every confidence that their child will be safe, well looked after and will thrive.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are exceptionally well informed about pupils' progress, including school performance data, and the management of the performance of teachers. They effectively manage financial control, including the salary arrangements for teaching, and are fully involved in how good teaching is rewarded and any underperformance tackled. They maintain very close supervision of pupil premium funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. Governors are fully involved in the school's self-review, target-setting and monitoring processes. They take part in regular training, such as in child protection and comparisons of pupils' performance data. Consequently, nominated members are well informed, for instance about health and safety matters and the safeguarding of the children and in ensuring their high levels of achievement and well-being.

## 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>	125468
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	432087

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>	11–19
<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>	66
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gill Golding
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Mardell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24–25 June 2009
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