

Wood Bank School

Dene View, Luddendenfoot, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX2 6PB

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Following the previous inspection, the rate of school improvement slowed. However, since the arrival of the new headteacher, the school is moving forward at a remarkable rate.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Although in small steps, they make at least good progress in all subjects.
- Achievement in music, dance and as members of the 'signing' choir is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching is good, and at times outstanding.
- Teachers are imaginative in gaining pupils' attention, in their use of equipment, and in making best use of the very cramped classrooms.
- The wide range of subjects and activities is innovative and excites pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and all that the school has to offer. Their behaviour is good and they say they always feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Many necessary changes have been made over the past six months.
- Staff have embraced the new ideas and ways of working saying, for example, they are excited about where the school is heading.
- Governors know well how the school works and have set demanding targets for the headteacher and for the school to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to the highest level.
- Outstanding opportunities for a high proportion of pupils to spend time in their local primary school contribute considerably to their learning and to their personal development.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and appreciate the high-quality care it provides for their children.
- Excellent links with numerous health and other professionals ensures pupils are very well cared for and receptive to learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. This is because there are not enough opportunities to further the skills of the most able pupils in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics in all lessons, and in displays.
- Adults do not always use signs and symbols to help pupils with limited speech as often as they should.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons, or parts of lessons, taught by nine different teachers or teaching assistants.
- Two of the lesson observations were jointly undertaken with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books and their 'Learning Journeys'.
- From discussions and a staff questionnaire, the inspectors took into account the views of staff.
- Discussions were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke with parents. They also took account of the 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and to the school's own survey of parents' views.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents concerning safeguarding.

Inspection team

Katharine Halifax, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wood Bank School caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and for pupils with autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are undergoing the required assessment.
- An increasing number of pupils have degenerative or life-limiting medical conditions, or are terminally ill.
- Pupils can be admitted at any time of the school year.
- With 70 pupils on roll, the school is at full capacity.
- Almost one half of the pupils are of White British heritage. A similar proportion are of South East Asian heritage. A higher than average proportion are new to speaking English, or do not speak English at home.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is high. Pupil premium funding is intended for pupils eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority, or from families in the armed forces.
- The school works collaboratively with a range of partners including social care, occupational therapists, the multi-sensory team, the school nursing team, and speech and language therapists.
- The new headteacher has been in post for six months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and thereby improve pupils' learning by:
 - making sure that the most able pupils are helped to improve their reading, writing, spelling and mathematics in all lessons
 - making sure that all adults use signs and symbols to aid communication
 - making sure displays celebrate and support pupils' achievements and learning in literacy and numeracy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is low because of their special educational needs. Nevertheless, taking account of their various starting points, equally good progress is made by boys and girls and by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The same is so for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding. Intensive individual work by enables them to make equally good progress, especially in communication and physical activities.
- All pupils make excellent progress in information and communication technology (ICT), especially in the use of equipment to help them communicate their ideas or needs.
- Adults endeavour to provide equal opportunities for all pupils with special educational needs. While this speeds up the progress of most, opportunities are missed to further the reading, writing, and spelling of the most able pupils. The progress of these pupils is good in English lessons and when working their way through the reading scheme. However, they are not challenged sufficiently to spell out or recognise important new words in subjects such as history, geography and science. Furthermore, they do not always record their learning in their books. This means their handwriting and spelling do not progress as well as they could.
- Pupils make similarly good progress in mathematics lessons, but do not always apply their knowledge to count, work out simple sums or create simple graphs in other subjects.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress because of the way they are taught. The use of real objects and activities which awaken all their senses gives them a better grasp of their surroundings and helps them to communicate.
- Parents especially appreciate the good progress pupils with autism make. They become familiar with their daily routine and cope with increasingly challenging social situations. For example, parents commented they had never imagined their child would manage in a busy supermarket, or behave appropriately in a café.
- Adults are expert at maintaining the skills of pupils with degenerative and life-limiting conditions, and of those who are terminally ill. As a result, these pupils continue to enjoy learning.
- The talents of pupils who show flair in, for example, music, dance or sport are encouraged. In addition to acquiring a range of skills, these activities add considerably to pupils' confidence.
- The excellent programme for pupils to work alongside their friends in several local primary school has increased their learning and social development. As a consequence, three pupils have recently successfully transferred to mainstream education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have a very good understanding of what is expected of them because of the first-rate feedback they receive from the headteacher about their work. In addition, regular professional training allows them to now keep pace with what is happening in their field.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have an in-depth knowledge of pupils, and of the way they learn, accurately matching activities to their varying abilities and resulting in good progress. For example, in a mathematics lessons, pupils with PMLD gained an awareness of shape through exploring circles of differing sizes and textures, while the most able pupils sang songs about shape and listing their attributes, demonstrating their knowledge that a square has four sides, and a triangle three sides.
- At the start of each lesson, adults take a few moments to make sure each pupil is correctly seated in their wheelchair, or properly positioned in their standing frame. This makes sure pupils are comfortable and ready to learn.
- Teachers make sure that the activities provided are a suitable match for each of the 10 pupils in their group. This is no mean feat because of the exceptionally wide range of abilities in each class. Much of the time this works well, but on occasions, the most able pupils are insufficiently

challenged. For example, in a science lesson, pupils of all abilities made very good gains in their awareness and understanding of parts of the body. However, teaching did not extend the reading, writing and spelling of the most able pupils sufficiently in spelling the key vocabulary or recording their knowledge.

- In a daily session working on individual targets in numeracy and literacy, the most able pupils made excellent progress in counting spots, knowing the difference between 'big' and 'small', and in recognising individual letters and the sounds they make. However, they did not record their knowledge so the opportunity for them to progress in their writing was overlooked.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are an effective team. They share the work of checking pupils' progress in lessons. The good teaching of teaching assistants and technicians was observed when, for example, they took charge of an activity to improve pupils' speaking and listening, or using an 'electronic tablet' to improve a pupil's understanding of words that rhyme.
- Communication is generally taught very well. Adults expect pupils to vocalise their answers and contribute to discussions. Many pupils need to use signs or symbols to make what is being said meaningful and to communicate. In addition, some pupils benefit from the use of a picture exchange system to make their needs, such as using the toilet or needing a drink, known but these are not used consistently by all staff. Consequently, pupils are sometimes left confused or not able to take an active part in a discussion.
- Extensive 'learning journeys' evidence magical moments for parents, such as their child standing for the first time, or counting to 10, but these are not always dated nor do they give information about the context of the action, or the level of attainment the pupil reached.
- Considerable work has been done on achieving consistency between the displays in each classroom. A timetable made up of symbols allows pupils of all abilities to know the order of lessons for the day. Attractive displays about the topics being studied aid pupils' learning. While some classrooms have, for example, a line of numbers and the odd bit of equipment labelled, there is little evidence of the letters, sounds and words to further pupils' learning in literacy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are keen and eager to learn showing a lively interest in their work. They express their delight in many ways. For example, beaming with pride as they beat a drum, or giggling joyfully as they make a choice of shape by pointing with their eyes.
- Many pupils have very limited movement, but show tremendous patience and perseverance and making enormous efforts to grasp an object, or when endeavouring to touch the correct icon on a 'tablet'.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents and staff express no concerns about pupils' behaviour and safety. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is impeccable in lessons and at break and lunch time. High quality training in managing the behaviour of pupils with the most complex needs allows these pupils to make strides in controlling their outbursts.
- On occasions, however, the concentration of a handful of the most able pupils lapses when they are not the focus of their teacher's attention, and a little mischief creeps in, such as pretending to splash their classmates with water.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities because, while adults are good models of behaviour, kind and helpful, they insist pupils do as much as they can for themselves. Pupils gain a good insight into the rich cultural mix of Britain through experiencing celebrations such as Eid, Diwali and Hanukkah.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Adults have an in-depth knowledge of each pupil's condition. The administration of medication, feeding and personal hygiene is carried out meticulously while ensuring each pupil's dignity is maintained.
- Within their understanding, pupils have a very good awareness of keeping safe. They say they are not frightened of anything or anybody. There is no evidence of bullying and there have been no racist incidents or exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' attendance is checked carefully. Although attendance is below average, pupils attend whenever they are well enough.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders know exactly how good the school is and what is needed to move it forwards. Their management of the school is forward-thinking, thoughtful and determined. They have successfully created an atmosphere where pupils and adults thrive.
- Staff say they are amazed and excited by the speed of school improvement and are proud to be valued members of a dynamic team.
- On appointment, the new headteacher recognised a number of key documents did not match the school's current position and so these were rewritten. Leaders' view of its performance is now accurate and the priorities reflected in the school development plan.
- Systems to check on the performance of teachers are now robust. Regular observations of classroom practice coupled with high quality professional training have made sure teachers know exactly what they need to do to reach the highest level.
- A wealth of information has been gathered detailing the progress pupils make. Until this school year however, the information was not used to compare the progress of different groups of pupils. As a result until recently, leaders were not clear if any groups of pupils were making particularly good progress, or in danger of falling behind.
- Many of the middle managers (subject leaders) are relatively new to post. Nevertheless, they have made a good start in identifying what is needed to raise attainment in their subject and how they intend to go about this. They are planning for the national changes to be brought about at the start of the next school year.
- The pupil premium funding is being used well to extend the experiences of all pupils, for intensive individual work, and to provide additional adult support where necessary.
- The primary school sports funding is being used effectively. Part of the funding is being used to train staff in rebound therapy (using the trampoline) and the remainder to provide off-site water and rebound therapies for pupils with the most profound and complex needs, neither of which are available on the Wood Bank site. This is having a considerable positive effect on pupils' health and well-being.
- Staff are imaginative in the subjects that are taught and how they are taught. For example, 'running and communication' at the start of each day allows pupils with autism to expend energy while following instructions such as 'stop', 'sit', 'stand', interacting with their classmates and increasing their awareness of the world around them.
- Leaders recognise that while English and mathematics are on the timetable, more needs to be done to promote the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy in all subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body provide good support for the school. They use their individual skills and knowledge of special educational needs to challenge the school vigorously. They gain a good overview of the school's day-to-day work through visits and frequent discussions with leaders. The governing body checks that all pupils are making progress and that the pupil premium funding is used appropriately to provide equality of opportunity and to contribute to achievement. Governors have a good view of teachers' performance and how this is linked to their pay. The school's finances are managed efficiently. The arrangements to protect and safeguard pupils are robust.

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	107590
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	431575

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Crane
Headteacher	Richard Pawson
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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