

Southall School

Off Rowan Avenue, Dawley, Telford, TF4 3PX

Inspection dates

25–26 February 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, together with a strong senior leadership team and a governing body that supports her well, have enabled the school to become better.
- Rigorous checking of students' progress means that the school knows exactly how well each is doing. It is quick to act if any student's progress appears to be slowing.
- Teachers make sure that different groups of students have work that challenges them and helps them make good, and sometimes better, progress in their learning.
- All students, including those supported through additional funds made available to schools by the government, make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Students achieve good qualifications including some at GCSE level. Strong teaching in art, performing arts and physical education, promotes particularly good progress.
- A strong emphasis on training for staff and effective management of their performance means that teaching is continually improving. Staff, including those new to the school, are trained very well to meet the range of special educational needs and disabilities in the school.
- Students behave well. Individuals make great strides in improving their behaviour. The school keeps students very safe. Wide ranging activities after school, visits and visitors promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well. Students have rich opportunities to learn about other cultures, their customs and values.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorders benefit from very well thought out individual programmes and lessons with their classmates. They make particularly strong progress in their communication skills and ability to adapt to different situations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and homework are not always used to best effect by teachers to help students make even faster progress and to involve parents more in their children's learning.
- Reading and writing skills are developed in other subjects but not consistently enough to improve students' skills more rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed the teaching in all year groups. They visited 16 lessons. The headteacher or deputy headteacher joined them for almost all of these visits.
- The inspectors held discussions with students, the headteacher and senior leadership team, other teachers, teaching assistants and members of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work and talked with them about their work, sometimes asking them to read it. They looked at a range of evidence, including the ways in which the school analyses and checks on students' progress, safeguarding documentation, records of behaviour and evidence as to how the school checks on, and improves, the quality of teaching.
- The views of 13 parents, who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire on the Parent View website were considered. The inspectors also took account of the school's own survey of parents which comprised 74 responses. Fifty five questionnaires filled in by staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Heald

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southall School is designated a special school for students who have complex needs. This means that students have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities and almost all have multiple difficulties. These include moderate or severe learning difficulties, speech language and communication difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. About half are students with autistic spectrum disorders. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. A much higher than usual proportion is supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority or have a parent in the armed forces). The school also receives additional Year 7 'catch up' funding to help students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Students in Year 11 attend Telford College of Advanced Technology or The Madeley Academy as part of their programme of study and preparation for college. They study courses such as childcare, motor vehicle maintenance and hospitality and catering.
- The school was just completing a period of major building and refurbishment at the time of the inspection. An arts block had recently opened and a new sports hall was almost complete.
- The headteacher is seconded for part of her week to be executive headteacher of the local authority Key Stage 3 Pupil Referral Unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and hence achievement, to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - marking is used to help students to be clearer about what is good about their work, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work even more
 - subject leaders monitor the quality of marking in their subjects rigorously in order to make it better
 - homework is used more consistently to extend students' learning
 - parents are better informed about how they can help their children with homework and become even more involved in their child's learning.
- Make sure that teachers in all subjects provide regular opportunities for students to practice, and hence improve, their reading and writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with skills much lower than others of their age because of their particular learning needs, but all groups make at least good progress from their starting points in all subjects. Many, for example those on the autistic spectrum, make even better progress in developing their communication skills and their ability to cope with change.
- Students show tremendous enjoyment of learning, something they say they often did not have before they came to this school. They trust, and have confidence in, their teachers. They feel safe to learn and enjoy the challenges from the work they are now doing.
- Students' achievement has improved considerably since the last inspection because the work they do now stretches and challenges them well. Seventy per cent of students achieved a GCSE in 2013, including a small number in mathematics and English. Those taking alternative courses such as Entry Level qualifications currently achieve higher levels than was the case at the previous inspection, despite students now having lower starting points. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language do well.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as, and sometimes, better than their classmates. There is no gap in the attainment of these students and others in English or mathematics by the time they leave the school. This is because the funding is used carefully to support eligible students. Similarly the Year 7 catch up funding has been used well. All students in Year 7 are making at least expected progress in reading and mathematics because of this. The school uses its additional funding to provide more individual and group work or specialist support. It checks carefully on how well students are doing and how well this support is helping.
- Students' progress in mathematics has improved particularly well because the school has reviewed the ways in which it teaches this subject. High numbers of students make better than expected progress in this subject and in science. In art, performing arts and physical education individual students make exceptional progress. The school is quick to identify their talents and to make sure they have every opportunity to shine. For example, students demonstrate the right way to stand and to hold the bat in table tennis with fierce determination and show off their detailed models for animation with pride in art.
- Progress in English is good but not as many students make better than the expected progress in reading and writing as in mathematics. More recently the school has introduced guided reading sessions and regular work on phonics, the sounds that letters make, to help accelerate these skills further. There are good signs that the new initiatives are beginning to make a difference. This is particularly so in terms of increasing students' confidence and enjoyment in reading, and the ways in which they 'have a go' at spellings in their writing. The work has yet to impact fully.
- All students who have left the school since its last inspection have continued into further education and training and almost everyone has managed to sustain their continuing education placements. The courses that students do at Telford College or the Madeley Academy help them to gain skills and qualifications that set them up very well for this and help them to make up their minds about future qualifications.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and has improved well since the last inspection because teachers now use the information the school holds about students' prior achievements effectively to plan appropriate follow-on work and make sure that tasks are pitched at the right level of difficulty. Consequently, students make good progress in their understanding and skills in subjects whether they are working in groups or as a whole class.
- Teachers are skilled at exciting students' attention at the beginning of lessons. This ensures that students are involved and interested right from the beginning. They continue to listen and work well because the activities are interesting and engaging.
- Sometimes students' learning and progress are outstanding as in physical education when they learned about table tennis and in performing arts when they learned about pitch. This is because not a moment for learning was lost as students were challenged to develop, and share, their ideas. Where teaching is outstanding, high quality activities, strong questioning and explanations develop students' interest, understanding and skills extremely well.
- Teachers are very focused on helping students to gain the skills and qualifications they need to have choices in the next stage of their education or in their working life. The school draws on community resources well to help students apply and develop their skills and confidence, for example through their vocational courses at college or other schools or through visits.
- Teachers are expert at managing the behaviour of students and helping them to understand their own needs. Students with autistic spectrum disorders and others with communication and language needs make considerable strides in these areas because staff address their special educational needs exceptionally well as part of their ongoing teaching. Staff in The Hub, a specialist support area in the school for students with autism spectrum disorders or communication needs, provide expert advice and help to teachers on how they can adapt their teaching to include these students effectively.
- The teaching of reading and writing is good in English but in other subjects these are not always systematically developed, for example, by ensuring pupils have opportunities to write at length or helping them to spell out new words. This means students do not practice their reading and writing skills often enough to enable them to make more rapid progress.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations. This means they are very clear about what each student needs to learn next and how to adapt their lessons to achieve this. However, although spoken feedback to students encourages them and spurs them on to do more, marking is not used as effectively by all teachers to help students to understand what their targets are, how they are doing against their targets and to think about the next steps towards meeting these. Homework is not regularly set so that classwork can be further built on at home and some parents are unsure as to how they can help their children with homework.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning and are used to very good effect particularly when students are taught in groups and individually. For example, they take a leading role in guided reading sessions or ensure that students with physical needs are very well included in physical education and that their physiotherapy targets are met.
- Teaching is particularly supportive of students' confidence and skills both within the school and when attending off-site courses so that they enjoy their off campus teaching. They say they are sure they will manage well when they leave the school and know that the courses will interest them, because of they already have some experience of these.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. In lessons it is sometimes exemplary. The large majority of students make good or better progress in learning to manage their own behaviour. A very few continue to find this difficult and the school works hard to ensure that this does not interfere with the learning and safety of other students.
- Students are keen to learn and take pride in their school and their achievements. They are pleased that they can now do GCSE work at the school and are determined to do as well as they can. They love the ways in which the school environment has been improved and their artwork is centre stage on the school's walls. This is reflected in their good attendance, which has improved considerably since the last inspection, and the respect with which they treat the resources they have for learning.
- Not all students understand their targets and levels, however, or are clear what their next steps are towards these. Teachers do not use marking to best effect to help them with this.
- Those students with autistic spectrum disorders make particularly strong progress in their ability to participate in learning and social experiences with others. They learn to be more flexible. They say the school helps them to understand their autism so that they know how to tell others about it, but also about what they can do to help themselves.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A culture of care and concern and celebration of each child infuses the whole school. This is reflected in the Hub, where students with autistic spectrum disorders can go if they feel stressed or concerned. The school checks behaviour and attendance of students on off-site courses and arrangements to keep them safe.
- Bullying is rare. If it does occur students know that 'there will be consequences', as one student said. Students understand the different forms of bullying, including that of social media sites. This is because the school finds many different ways of exploring such issues.
- Students are accepting of each others' differences although they say that occasionally incidents do happen that worry them, when other students get upset or cross. In these instances they say staff reassure them very well so that they can quickly get on with lessons. Support staff are used very well to mentor and to keep those with the most complex behavioural needs safe.
- Students have good access to advice about careers and are clear that their college work and off-site courses help prepare them very well in terms of exploring their interests and building new skills. They also feel that these experiences and all the different things they do in the community help them to feel safer in the community and to be more confident about the future.

The leadership and management are good

- The outstanding headteacher and her leadership team are very clear about the strengths of the school and what it needs to do next. They have improved teaching and achievement as well as managing considerable improvements to the school buildings since the last inspection. Leaders have very high expectations of both students and staff. The school is very well set up to improve further.
- School self evaluation is accurate and school improvement plans clearly identify what needs to move forward including those aspects identified during this inspection. For example, staff training has already begun in relation to marking and assessment. Improving progress further in

English has also been identified as a priority. The focus on mathematics over the last two years has led to much stronger progress in this subject.

- Excellent systems are now in place for gathering information on, and checking, students' progress. This means programmes can be quickly matched to students' needs and that the school is very alert to any individual that might be falling behind. It sets challenging targets for every student and links staff performance to student progress. Any issues identified in the progress that students make feature in the school improvement plan.
- Teaching has improved because of the rigorous way in which it is checked and the excellent use of training to develop staff skills further. Excellent systems are in place to enable newly qualified teachers, and others who are new to the school, to develop their understanding of the range of special educational needs represented in the school and how to address these. They are, for example, given opportunities to teach alongside more experienced colleagues.
- Subject leaders are now taking a greater role in improving their subjects, including the teaching, and are increasingly effective. However, although they check on work in books, they have not all been rigorous enough in ensuring marking and feedback are consistently helpful for students.
- The range of qualifications students can take has been widened considerably and reflects the leadership's ambition and high expectations of students. An appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and key skills, including skills in using information and communication technology, and a good range of vocational qualifications prepare students very well for working life.
- An exceptional range of community activities, sporting, arts-related and performance based, as well as Duke of Edinburgh awards and residential experiences enrich the curriculum considerably. All these, plus the many ways in which the school helps students to reflect on their own needs and behaviour, make a strong contribution to their personal development.
- The school works well with partner agencies such as the health authority and social care to secure the health and wellbeing of students. For example, it uses some of its additional funding to train staff so that students who have physical needs have specialist help for learning. It works well with parents who are very positive about what the school. A very few were keen, however, for more involvement in their children's learning through homework.
- The local authority rightly regards this as a strong school which can share its practice with other schools. It provides appropriate support including for governors and for school self evaluation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are hugely committed to this school and are determined that it should improve continuously. They bring useful and varied skills to the school that support its work well. Governors understand their responsibilities and provide a good level of challenge to school leaders. They have been careful, for example, to monitor the headteacher's secondment to ensure there is no adverse impact on Southall
 - The governing body fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities, including checking that safeguarding requirements are met both in the school and when students are off-site. Governors visit regularly, holding discussions with subject leaders as well as senior leaders and with students, exploring how new resources or programmes are making a difference or how different groups of students are doing

- Governors check up regularly on how teaching is improving and how the leadership assesses its effectiveness. They are clear as to the links between teachers' performance, pupil progress and teachers' pay and monitor these carefully. They understand the need to question and analyse student progress and do so, checking, for example, on how well students entitled to the pupil premium are doing.

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	123631
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	431150

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ewen MacLeod
Headteacher	Jo Burdon
Date of previous school inspection	Tuesday, March 13, 2012
Telephone number	01952 387600
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