

Fairfields School

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, NN2 6JN

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

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

- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics because they are taught exceptionally well.
- Pupils make rapid gains in communicating their needs using gesture, specialist technology and words.
- As children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn to make themselves understood they blossom in confidence and their behaviour improves significantly. Their achievement is outstanding.
- Pupils gain confidence in moving more freely by themselves because of a specialist program provided for them.
- Teaching is inspirational. Teachers plan creatively to ensure activities are closely tailored to pupil’s capabilities. They provide the correct level of challenge to help pupils to move on to their next important small step in learning.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Meticulous care is taken to keep pupils safe and to remove barriers that would otherwise get in their way of learning.
- Pupils’ intimate care and medical needs are met exceptionally well.
- A rich range of subjects and therapeutic programs successfully contribute to pupils learning and outstanding achievement.
- The exceptionally effective leadership of the headteacher, other leaders and managers, and the governing body has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and raised pupils’ achievement since the last inspection.
- The school provides high quality training and support for other neighbouring schools.
- All the adults support pupils effectively. Very occasionally, when they work with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, a lack of confidence to make on-the-spot changes in lessons slightly delays new learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons. Nine of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector also observed two Hungarian conductive tutors delivering conductive education (a movement program).
- Inspectors listened to pupils from different disability and special educational needs groups read. In addition, inspectors observed feeding programs being carried out.
- A detailed work scrutiny was carried out in partnership with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The arrival of pupils in taxis and buses at the start of the school day was observed.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector spoke over the telephone with a small sample of headteachers from neighbouring schools who are supported by Fairfield's School.
- Inspectors examined pupils' intimate care plans, their handling plans, a selection of feeding plans, a sample of statements of special educational needs, restraints data, attendance data and pupil progress data. They also examined teachers' planning, the school's improvement plan, monitoring of teaching and learning information, a wide range of policies including the appraisal policy and all safeguarding policies, and minutes of governing body meetings. Recent visit notes following local authority visits to the school were examined.
- Inspectors examined 28 questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire Parent View for an analysis to be made. However, inspectors examined 69 completed questionnaire returns submitted by parents in response to the school's recent parental survey.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philippa Holliday

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school makes provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and visual impairment. A significant number of pupils have additional complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- A conductive education program (movement program) is delivered by two conductor tutors trained at the PETO Institute in Hungary.
- Fairfield's School is a National Teaching and Training School. As such it provides training and support for neighbouring schools within the local authority of Northamptonshire.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above the national average. This is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, from service families or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, as is the proportion from families who speak English as an additional language.
- Ten pupils receive part of their weekly education in mainstream primary schools alongside their peers and a small number follow a design and technology course in a neighbouring school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are challenged consistently in all lessons by enabling all staff who work with them to have the confidence to change what they are doing on the 'spot' so as to move these pupils on with important new small steps of learning as soon as they are ready.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with very low starting points because of their complex needs. Typically, they demonstrate extremely challenging behaviour linked to their lack of communication skills. Often they are not able to move by themselves. High quality support, from teachers and health professionals, help them to overcome these barriers to learning and they make outstanding progress. A few begin to speak using single words; most use gesture to let adults know what they want; others communicate by taking an adult by the hand towards what they want. A few begin to move by themselves.
- Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, all pupils, whatever their particular disability or special educational needs, make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6 most pupils make better than nationally expected progress in English and mathematics for pupils with complex needs measured against their starting points.
- Achievement in communication is a particular strength for all groups of pupils because the school searches and finds the most effective way forward for each individual pupil. For example, some pupils use specialist technology and switches; others use gesture and pictures; and yet others are positioned carefully so that they can communicate by pointing with their eyes.
- Achievement in reading and writing is outstanding for all groups. For example, in reading pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make small but highly significant gains as they learn to eye-point at puppets during sensory story time. In contrast, the most-able pupils with severe learning difficulties have the skills and confidence to sound out a new word they meet when reading a story book. With hand-over-hand support from teaching assistants, pupils who find writing extremely difficult make the shape of a letter with their fingers in 'gloop'. The most-able pupils can write a short sentence accurately by themselves using a capital letter, a connective and a full-stop. Pupils make such outstanding progress because the work builds up their skills so carefully and challenges them to do even better.
- Pupils' mathematical development builds step-by step on their previous learning and all make outstanding progress. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties feel the shape of numbers with their fingers and the most-able pupils carry out calculations and solve simple problems.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to support individual pupils and help them to learn more. For some it pays for them to go on a residential trip, so that they apply skills they have been learning, as well as improving their confidence and personal development. Mostly it is used to provide additional support in English and mathematics for those pupils eligible. As a result these pupils, including those looked after by the local authority make the same outstanding progress in English and mathematics as their classmates.
- Minority ethnic pupils, including those from families that speak English as an additional language, make similarly outstanding progress as their classmates, because the school attends to their needs and provides highly effective support for them and their families as they begin to communicate.
- Pupils with the most complex medical needs sometimes slip backwards because their ill-health necessitates lengthy stays in hospital. However, the dedicated work by staff (including health professionals) enables them to reach their full-potential when they are back at school.

- The most-able who attend a mainstream primary school for part of the week gain in confidence and learn well in a range of subjects. Those pupils who attend the design and technology course also make gains in overcoming their difficulties.
- Outstanding achievements in personal development are valued by parents. For example, pupils make outstanding progress in how they learn to move for themselves. Some manage to keep their balance while using their hands when they are out of their wheelchairs. Others learn how to use their fingers to do up their buttons and untie their shoe laces. A few who were on bottle milk when they started at school begin to enjoy solid food; those who need it are given specially adapted cutlery to support them in feeding themselves. All this is achieved because of the very high quality of teaching and the ways in which tutors, teachers and therapists work together and implement specialist programs.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Typically most teaching is outstanding both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, including in English and mathematics. None is less than good. The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the quality of teaching.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and know what best helps them learn. Classrooms are set out in a way that best helps pupils with different disabilities to speed up their learning. For example, there are quiet work areas to prevent those pupils with autism spectrum disorder from being distracted, while those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are provided with a sensory environment to stimulate their learning. Activities are chosen carefully to engage pupils' interests as well as to develop their skills. Teaching assistants are used very effectively to support pupils' learning. These factors contribute successfully to pupils' enjoyment of, and enthusiasm for, learning.
- A wide range of therapeutic programs and specialist methods are used, with considerable expertise, by staff, to provide excellent support for pupils' learning. Teachers and therapists work very closely together to deliver these programs.
- Adaptations to furniture and modifications to resources support pupils' with physical disabilities in accessing productive learning opportunities. Because teaching assistants know pupils so well, they are able to manage their behaviour skilfully. On rare occasions when a few pupils lose concentration on their work and wander off task, teaching assistants swiftly bring them back to purposeful learning.
- Detailed assessments, lesson by lesson, lie at the heart of the successful teaching in this school. Thorough and detailed knowledge of what pupils know and can do is used in each lesson to provide tailored support to individual pupils and so improve their reading and writing, and quicken their development of new mathematical skills.
- Pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' methods in a manner they feel most comfortable with. This both deepens their understanding and improves their communication skills. Typically, pupils who cannot express themselves in words are encouraged to sign answers to questions or use their electronic augmentative communication devices to do so, helping them to learn.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics enables pupils with a wide range of needs to learn effectively, depending on their individual preferences. In mathematics it varies from setting up opportunities for pupils to track a straight line of light in the sensory room with their eyes to providing solving problem activities to enable the most-able pupils to apply their calculation

skills. Similarly, pupils have a wide range of activities and resources provided to support their development of writing skills.

- The therapy delivered by teachers in all classes strongly assists pupils' personal development and enhances their learning. Specific taught programs enhance their communication and mobility skills.
- Pupils' work is annotated with detailed notes to inform planning to raise their achievement. Often it contributes to a re-alignment of approach to teaching so as to increase pupils learning. Those pupils who show signs of falling behind receive one-to-one support to help them catch up.
- Very occasionally, adults do not consistently use their observations of what pupils do to change what they are doing quickly enough to enable the best progress to be made by pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example, when pupils come close to grasping an object or pushing with their feet for the first time, and need a little extra help to enhance their chances of being successful.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers remove obstacles that could interfere with their learning. For example, they position pupils comfortably, when required, using specially adapted chairs so that they can reach the equipment they need to learn.
- Exceptionally skilful behaviour management of pupils with autism spectrum disorder ensures that they are swiftly re-engaged with learning when their attention wanders. Physical interventions to keep pupils safe are rare and all pupils who experience them have detailed handling plans.
- Pupils welcome visitors warmly. Some smile; some sign 'Good morning'; and others say 'Hello'. Lunchtimes are happy, family-based occasions where pupils and staff eat together and pupils learn valuable social skills.
- There are no recorded instances of bullying or racism. Yet pupils able to speak using words know that they can tell an adult if another pupil is nasty to them. There are no exclusions.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils who require lifting are supported in slings that are regularly checked to ensure that they are safe. Arrival and departure by taxi and busses is monitored rigorously to ensure that it is safe. Pupils with intimate care needs are treated with dignity and can choose who they want to support them. Pupils trust adults within the school. For example, they put their trust in adults when using the hydrotherapy pool.
- Within their capability pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The most-able know that they must put a helmet on when they ride their specially modified 'bikes' and they understand the importance of being wary of strangers. Those with the ability and physical skills required to do so move around the school's building in their wheelchairs carefully so that they do not bump into their friends. In the hydrotherapy pool those with the physical ability to learn to swim understand why they must put inflated arm bands on.
- Attendance has risen to average and is improving further. Most absence is due to lengthy hospital stays.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. She has very successfully communicated high expectations to staff and pupils alike. A strong learning culture has been established and all staff have embraced the school's vision of the highest achievement for every pupil.
- Leaders, never complacent, have a clear understanding of the importance of continuous improvement and have a deep commitment and understanding of how to bring it about. There are plans to improve the accommodation and resources so as to benefit the pupils further.
- Frequent checks on teachers' work, supported by the local authority, and regular meetings of all staff in the teams that support the different disability and special educational needs groups represented in the school to discuss pupils' progress mean that teachers are held to account for the effect their work has on pupils' achievement. There is a ceaseless drive to continue to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school.
- Senior leaders closely analyse data to make sure all pupils make outstanding progress. Where required, they re-align the support provided to give all pupils equal opportunities to succeed and to avoid any possible discrimination. Three qualified teachers are used as teaching assistants to give pupils one-to-one support where needed to help them catch up when they fall behind.
- The raft of training courses provided for teachers has made an exceptionally valuable contribution to their skills, particularly in the use of questions to deepen pupils' understanding and in the teaching of pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Subject leaders for English and mathematics and the leaders of specific programs, such as the program to improve pupils' mobility, make an outstanding contribution to school improvement.
- The management and co-ordination of the team of therapists help remove barriers to the personal development and academic learning for pupils. They make an outstanding contribution to enhancing students' communication skills.
- The programmes of work meet pupils' academic and personal needs exceptionally well. There is a laser-sharp focus on improving pupils' communication skills in imaginative and innovative ways. An extensively wide range of interesting activities is provided so as to broaden pupils' horizons and contribute to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Sensory trails throughout the school arouse pupils' curiosity and their development of awareness of cultural diversity is exceptional. Pupils visit places of worship (including Hindu and Buddhist temples); they learn Spanish, participate in French days and have opportunities to communicate with pupils from schools in India and Africa. Learning is enriched by many trips out and visitors into school.
- The school makes creative use of its primary sports funding to increase the resources available to support pupils' improve their freedom of movement. It also enables pupils to participate in competitive sport with other schools; to go sailing; and learn to ride a horse. Such activities provide opportunities for pupils to enhance their physical well-being and improve their performance.
- Very effective workshops for parents support them in helping their children to improve their communication skills and patterns of behaviour. The school's family liaison officer is appreciated by parents for the support she offers them.

- The local authority provides outstanding support particularly in checking the accuracy of pupils' assessment and improving the quality of teaching. It has an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness.
- As a National Teaching and Training School not only does it provide high quality support to local schools it spreads its influence as far afield as India where support has been given to a school working with pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The current governing body is relatively new following a fairly recent turnover of governors. Already it is very knowledgeable about the school and has high expectations about its future development. Governors work hard to set a positive atmosphere for learning and to ensure that all pupils get the best possible education. They have started to ask challenging questions of school leaders about pupils' progress. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and check rigorously on the impact it is having on pupils' progress.
 - They visit the school regularly and gather evidence about how well the school is doing. Recently they have engaged in a review of how well design and technology is being taught. They have a very good awareness of the quality of teaching. Governors are clear that only effective teachers are rewarded. There is a clear and agreed approach to check how well the headteacher performs and to set her robust targets aimed at improving pupils' achievement. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively and ensure that the school meets all requirements in the way of safeguarding pupils.

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	122160
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	431221

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Esther Bushell
Headteacher	Corallie Murray
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
Telephone number	01604 714777
Fax number	01604 714245
Email address	head@fairfieldsschool.freemove.co.uk

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