

Nethergate School

Swansdowne Drive, Clifton, Nottingham, NG11 8HX

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Nearly all pupils make good progress and a significant number make outstanding progress from their low starting points.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress on their academic and vocational courses.
- Pupils' learning is good as a result of good teaching. All pupils enjoy learning because staff have established strong relationships with them, and use signing, symbols and practical resources effectively to enable them to fully participate in activities.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Most pupils attend regularly and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils stay safe around the school. Older pupils and sixth form students stay safe when attending college or the local farm.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved since the previous inspection. Senior leaders enjoy the full confidence of parents and staff.
- Governors effectively hold the school to account for its work and make a good contribution to school improvement, including to teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times, work is too easy for the few more-able pupils and, as a result, they make less progress than their classmates.
- Marking does not always make clear how pupils could improve their work.
- The new subject leaders and key stage leaders have not yet put into practice their plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons and saw all teachers, including lessons taught at Central College and Floraland Farm. Nine of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of their work with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with students in the sixth form and two groups of younger pupils. Other meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, key stage leaders and two members of the governing body who are also the academy trustees.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views. They talked to five parents individually when they brought their children to school, met with another group of five parents and looked at the school's most recent survey of parents as there were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also looked at 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's summary self-evaluation, risk assessments for students attending Central College courses and Floralands Farm Park (Access Training), safeguarding policies, records of behaviour, attendance figures, students' destinations when they leave school and information about pupils' progress over time.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural emotional and social difficulties, speech, language and communication disorders.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well above average. (This is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from a family with a parent in the armed forces.)
- The school provides part time education for its older pupils and sixth form students with various alternative providers. Two small groups of students attend Oak Field Special School in Nottingham for GCSE expressive arts for one session per week. Two groups of pupils in Years 9 and 10 attend a 10-week arts workshop at Derby University on Friday afternoons. Pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form attend a range of vocational courses at different Central College sites and Floralands Farm Park (Access Training) in Nottingham.
- The school converted to become an academy school in March 2012. When its predecessor school, Nethergate School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding. Since becoming an academy a new sixth form was established in September 2013 with its first intake of six Year 12 students. Three members of the governing body act as academy trustees.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - the learning of the few more-able pupils is always extended by giving them tasks which are difficult enough
 - marking always makes clear to pupils what they could do to improve their work
 - subject and key stage leaders implement their plans for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Inspection findings, including pupils' books, their learning in lessons and school data, shows that from their low starting points most pupils make at least good progress. A significant number make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils are making expected progress, including minority ethnic groups and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Approximately a third of pupils make more than expected progress.
- Progress is strongest in communication and language, where many pupils make outstanding progress. This is because of the consistent use of signing and the use of symbols. This enables all pupils, including those with more complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorders and speech, language and communication difficulties, to communicate.
- Good additional support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium enables them to do as well as their classmates. They make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are benefiting from primary sports funding through, for example, extra swimming and horse-riding sessions to improve their fitness.
- The few youngest pupils make at least good progress and sometimes outstanding progress in reading because they learn to make clear links between letters and their sounds and use this to read simple words and sentences. The school uses a commercial approach to the teaching of reading, where staff are well trained and apply the principles systematically. This ensures pupils make consistently good progress.
- The oldest pupils do well in their examination courses, with most gaining the equivalent of three GCSEs or equivalent in a range of subjects, including art, science, computing, English and mathematics. Most gain entry level qualifications, which are relevant to their future destinations, including functional skills examinations in information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy. A few pupils do not do as well in the functional skills examinations which test how they apply their skills of communication, literacy and numeracy to real-life situations.
- Nearly all pupils who left school in Year 11 and entered further education or training have managed to maintain their places over time showing that the school prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- The first intake of Year 12 students in the sixth form are making good progress, with nearly all making expected progress and a third exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The half termly reports from their college providers show that the oldest pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 12 are making good progress in their vocational courses such as animal care, hair and beauty, motor vehicle maintenance and music technology. The schools' information also shows that pupils attending the Derbyshire University course are making good progress in creative arts.
- Occasionally, as seen in pupils' books and school information about their progress, a few more-able pupils do not do as well as they could. This was confirmed in discussion with more-able pupils, who believe that learning tasks are not always challenging enough to extend their thinking.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good, including in English and mathematics, and an increasing proportion is outstanding.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, as seen in students' books in lessons and in the school's information of the progress they are making. Staff ensure that students' learning is planned in ways which motivates them and ensures that they make good progress.
- Staff maintain excellent relationships with pupils and this ensures that pupils are eager to do their best. Parents say that their children love learning and are growing in confidence as learners. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun.
- The way teachers make learning interesting was seen in pupils' books where, for example, they clearly enjoyed writing about rain forests and volcanoes. In lessons, Year 11 pupils and sixth form students at college greatly enjoyed learning about computer animation and another group of students thoroughly enjoyed carrying out health checks on rabbits as part of their animal care course.
- Pupils rapidly build up their basic skills of communication and language because staff consistently make good use of real-life resources, signing and symbols to enable pupils to communicate effectively. This was seen in a whole school 'big sing' assembly where all pupils signed and the majority sang all songs with excellent role models for signing provided by teachers and teaching assistants.
- The teaching of reading, writing and numeracy skills is good and there is a strong emphasis in ensuring that by the time they leave school, all pupils have a relevant qualification to enable them to be successful in further education or training.
- Teaching assistants usually provide good support for pupils' learning by breaking tasks down into smaller steps, providing plenty of examples to illustrate meaning, and providing positive praise and encouragement for learning.
- Good additional individual or small group support for pupils with more complex learning needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding helps them to learn new things quickly.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because a few pockets of teaching requires improvement and this limits pupils' learning and progress over time. Teachers make good use of assessment to plan learning activities which all pupils can do. However, they occasionally give more-able pupils work that is too easy for them. In addition, their marking does not always make clear to pupils what they could do to improve their work and this limits pupils' progress over time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to the school's code of conduct and its consistent use of rewards and sanctions.
- Pupils with extreme challenging behaviour make good progress in learning self-control because their behaviour is managed consistently well. As a result, exclusions are rare, there are few

recorded instances of bullying or racism and incidents of inappropriate behaviour steadily reduce over time.

- Pupils are respectful, polite and courteous to others. They work well together when asked to do so, listening carefully to the views of others.
- Nearly all pupils, including sixth form students, have good attitudes to learning. They want to do their best for staff, they concentrate on their activities and try hard to succeed. In discussion, different groups of pupils all agreed that learning is enjoyable.
- All pupils develop good awareness of why it is important to behave well at home and in school. Different pupils said that there is no bullying and if there were, it would be dealt with immediately.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils enter and leave the school safely. The school is thorough and up to date in assessing potential risks to pupils in school, on outside visits and when attending alternative providers.
- Pupils move safely from one area of the school to another. Students were observed walking safely down the stairs of Central College to the dining area and they all used computers safely during their computer animation lesson. Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school pays careful attention to safety.
- Nearly all pupils, except those who are ill or those who require regular therapy or hospitalisation, attend school regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is ably supported by senior leaders in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Together, through close and regular checks on teaching and learning, they have ensured that the proportion of outstanding teaching is rising and are effectively tackling the few remaining weaknesses in teaching. Staff morale is high and support from parents, as reflected in the school's own survey and in discussion, is good.
- The new sixth form is well led and managed. As a result, teaching and students' achievements are good. Good leadership by the sixth form leader has ensured that students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives by providing a range of practical vocational courses where students have varied options that interest them.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are good. Checks on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning are based on the national teaching standards. These are used to set clear targets for teachers in order to raise achievement. Staff benefit from continuous opportunities for training. Induction arrangements for new teachers are good and the school ensures that the most effective teachers are rewarded.
- Learning opportunities for all students are good. There is a strong emphasis on developing basic skills, particularly communication, which is taught through various themes. Older pupils have good opportunities to develop their independence skills through, for example, learning to travel safely on their own. Strong links with Central College and other alternative providers enable older pupils and sixth form students to prepare for further education. Good careers guidance and a relevant programme of work experience prepare students for the world of work.

- Good opportunities for celebrating success, reflection and working together, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn about diversity through, for example, visits to a Sikh temple and talking to Sikhs about their religion.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding to provide additional individual support programmes and small group work to make sure these pupils catch up with their classmates. Additional support by speech and language therapists and funding for school trips enables these pupils to benefit from the same activities as their classmates.
- Appropriate use is made of primary sport funding to provide extra physical activities for pupils, including swimming and horse-riding sessions for primary-aged pupils. This promotes pupils' enjoyment and fitness. The funding is also being used to increase the staff's skills in teaching physical education and to develop pupils' health and well-being.
- The special academy trustees provide good support and challenge for the school by visiting the school regularly to meet staff and by setting annual targets for improvement based on first hand monitoring of the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have successfully overseen the conversion of the school to a special academy and taken parents' views fully on board in developing sixth form provision. They are ensuring that the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding its pupils, by regularly reviewing and updating policies and procedures. They have a clear view of the governing body's strengths and what its members need to do to improve. This is because they have recently carried out an audit of their skills and have put in place actions to develop skills such as legal and financial expertise further. Through regular visits, governors have accurately identified with senior leaders clear strengths of teaching and areas for improvement. They use this information to influence the performance objectives for the headteacher. Governors carefully consider the school's data and use this to determine clear priorities for school development. They are holding the school to account for its spending of the pupil premium and have plans to look at the impact of spending of primary sport funding on pupils' health, fitness 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

Unique reference number	137915
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	431572

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Odell
Headteacher	Tracey Ydlibi
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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