

Shepherds Down School

Shepherds Lane, Compton, Winchester, SO21 2AJ

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Highly ambitious and caring leadership from the headteacher and senior team have resulted in excellent provision that enables all pupils to make outstanding progress during their time at the school.
- Children in the Early Years classes make outstanding progress and benefit from a wide range of individual opportunities that contribute to their strong personal development.
- Outstanding teaching has brought about this outstanding progress across the school, particularly in pupils' communication and personal development.
- Teaching provides high quality challenges to all groups and makes excellent use of purpose built resources to engage pupils' interests and develop their skills.
- The very strong focus on the use of communication aids ensures that all groups of pupils have a means to communicate, answer questions and make decisions.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Attendance has improved because pupils enjoy school every day.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school, and their parents overwhelmingly agree.
- The high quality range of learning opportunities, along with some excellent specialist facilities, engage pupils very well, contributing to their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Very well organised integrated therapies make an excellent contribution to pupils' care and welfare.
- The school receives light support appropriately from the local authority. Through their excellent outreach service, the school supports many other local schools.
- Leaders have built on the good quality of teaching noted at the time of the previous inspection by providing regular training and rigorous monitoring.
- Governors have continued to improve their leadership and monitoring roles. They provide excellent support, guidance and challenge to leaders. They ensure that there is sufficient funding to support all staff and to ensure that all pupils, including those who are eligible for additional funding, achieve as well as each other.
- The fund-raising efforts of the Friends Association and one individual benefactor make an exceptional contribution to the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, all jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a few shorter visits to smaller teaching groups to observe pupils' learning.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, other staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents that show how the school is improving, safeguarding information and pupils' books and files.
- Inspectors took account of the 32 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and spoke to a parent at the school during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of 44 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lily Evans

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Shepherds Down is an average-size special school for primary-aged pupils with profound and multiple or complex learning difficulties. There are more boys than girls on roll.
- All pupils enter school with a statement of special educational needs and many have associated disabilities, including autism, epilepsy and challenging behaviour.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The school serves a large area of Hampshire and pupils are admitted across the whole primary age range. The school has a stable population, with low numbers of pupils entering school during the year.
- A number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are educated in classes other than in the Early Years class. Many of the classes are mixed-age range and occasionally include pupils from different key stages.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for additional funding is above average. This is government funding that the school receives for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of military personnel. In this school there are no pupils from service families.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that plans being prepared to develop the new National Curriculum from September 2014 are fully in place without compromising current levels of achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Although there are minor variations, pupils enter the school with standards that are very low for their age.
- All pupils receive a very good start on entry to the school in the Reception classes as assessments of what they know and can do are rigorous and integration plans, with supportive care, are very well thought out. This means that pupils settle very quickly and make immediate progress.
- Observations of teaching during the inspection and extensive school records confirm that throughout the school all groups of pupils make at least consistently good progress and most make outstanding progress towards the clear and challenging targets in their individual education plans. The careful use of planning, that has learning aims in red, previous learning in blue and assessment opportunities in green, enables teachers to enhance achievement consistently.
- Pupils gain improved levels of self-esteem and confidence due to the committed relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met through one-to-one support.
- Pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills progress well and, as their confidence grows, many grasp the well-planned opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects. They do so increasingly well.
- The school's excellent systems that check on pupils' progress and development show that the school's aim for every pupil to achieve his or her potential, often based on making ambitious progress measured in terms of average points scores each year, is being successfully accomplished.
- Additional funding is targeted very effectively to raise achievement, for example through providing additional therapy, focused individual support and intervention programmes for identified pupils. In 2013 the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in both English and mathematics was well above that for groups of pupils in similar schools.
- Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are achieving very well and thoroughly enjoy their learning.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching across the school is outstanding. Teachers' planning is detailed and focuses on helping all pupils to succeed whatever their level of need. Teachers carefully match tasks to the needs of individuals and as a result pupils make secure and sustained progress over time. This outstanding progress is not just in wholly academic terms but in many ways. The fact that some pupils have been encouraged to eat proper foods in conventional ways and have gained unlimited confidence since being at the school is testament to the care and patience of all staff.
- Additional support staff are deployed very effectively and make excellent contributions to supporting pupils' progress, using carefully targeted questioning and regularly checking the pupils' understanding.
- A clear whole-school approach to making sure that all pupils participate in learning is very effective. Teachers make use of a range of strategies to engage all pupils actively in lessons. The use of a carefully focused range of individual or paired therapy sessions moves pupils forward rapidly through developing their confidence and levels of attention.
- Teachers skilfully adapt their lessons in response to pupils' reactions and feedback. By doing so they reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. This was perfectly illustrated in an outstanding lesson where the teacher used the story of the Rainbow Fish and simple cards on pegs to offer pupils choices. Pupils were highly engaged by the enthusiastic approach of the teacher; they enjoyed every single aspect and knew from their previous lessons what to expect and how to respond. The teacher's very skilful use of language and tone encouraged lively

responses. Pupils were quickly able to deepen their understanding and they made decisive gains in their learning.

- Teachers and support staff invariably provide tasks that are progressively more challenging and enable pupils to continue to progress through their careful monitoring of the pupils' learning each day.
- The whole-school approach to providing what is best for each pupil is well illustrated in the way that the beginning of each day in a class of the youngest children is started with 'breakfast club'. This ensures they have all eaten and are ready to learn by being part of the class and calmly using their communication aids and skills.
- Teachers' excellent knowledge of each pupil and enthusiasm to help pupils make the best possible progress provide a highly motivating atmosphere. Teachers are dedicated to providing the best educational experience for the pupils and give very generously of their time. Pupils and their parents and carers value this highly.
- The checks which take place across all subjects every half-term provide excellent opportunities to identify pupils' progress accurately. Pupils and teachers are very clear about whether or not this progress is fast enough and what to do if it is not.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding overall. The school is very welcoming and a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. The overall level of care extended to pupils is seamless and enables even those pupils with behavioural difficulties to be composed and part of the many well-planned activities.
- There have been excellent improvements in the pupils' behaviour over time across the school. The vast majority of pupils attend very regularly, work hard and are extremely positive in lessons. They are polite and considerate towards one another and to staff and visitors.
- Pupils are very proud of their achievements and are keen to share their successes with others. Different pupils take turns at being school councillors and act as very good role models for their peers. Their work to provide a memorial of the First World War in the shape of a 'Poppy Chair' is remarkable.
- Exceptionally well-constructed behaviour management systems are in place and skilfully implemented, with pupils having individual targets for improving their behaviour. Pupils know these systems and work well within them to gain rewards. The very careful use of the many different therapy sessions, such as music therapy and emotional literacy, raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence to tackle the increasingly difficult tasks.
- Highly effective out-of-class support is available for those whose behaviour gives cause for concern. Pupils continue to learn well even when they are unable to make it into class. They are given a range of choices as an alternative to their class lessons, including special withdrawal rooms and work spaces in the stunning outside areas. This arises because staff are so well aware of their pupils' needs and fully prepare them for their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Excellent teaching about staying safe on the internet is in place across the school. Bullying of any kind is unheard of and when individual incidents of harm occur they are dealt with very effectively and immediately recorded, with reports sent to school leaders and the local authority.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and is passionate about moving the school forward. She and the deputy headteacher are a very strong team. Their relentless drive for improvement is shared by all staff and governors. Over the last two years they have created a very strong senior leadership team and middle managers who are taking an increasing level of responsibility across the school. Their focus is on ensuring improvement continues with even greater rigour.
- The headteacher and governors have a very clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning. There is a high level of professional support for all staff,

which is linked closely to setting targets for teachers in order to improve their practice continuously. This holds teachers accountable for pupils' progress. Weaker aspects of teaching have been tackled vigorously and better teaching rewarded accordingly.

- The leadership team skilfully weaves together academic, personal and therapeutic aspects to meet the individual needs, aspirations and interests of each pupil. The school strives to ensure genuine equality of opportunity and avoid any discrimination. The many different subjects support pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development exceptionally well through creative activities such as music and drama activities, swimming and many visitors.
- There are strong partnerships with parents and carers who are extremely supportive. Parents and carers expressed extremely positive views of the school when responding to Parent View and were unanimous in saying that they would recommend the school to others.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted at all times and any discrimination is tackled rigorously. The additional government fund for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care is used extremely well to support these pupils and raise their achievement.
- The range of subjects offered provides exceptionally well for the needs of all pupils. The outside area, with its boardwalk, is used well. Currently, the staff are working towards making sure that high levels of achievement continue when the new curriculum is in place in September 2014.
- The new funding for physical education is being used extremely effectively and a significant amount has already been spent on employing expertise, such as an outstanding dance teacher and a wheelchair tennis coach. The school has also purchased new equipment and resources. Healthy exercise has a high priority and many sessions contain an exercise session.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough and pupils are kept completely safe.
- The local authority offers 'light touch' support appropriately to the school. The school, in turn, offers exemplary layers of outreach support to pupils in other special and mainstream schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body performs its role very effectively. Governors are acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have offered very strong support to management in the drive to improve. Their knowledge is based on first-hand experience as they are regular visitors to the school and each of these visits has a clear focus.
 - Governors know the extent of the good teaching and how the management of teachers' performance has been used effectively to improve the quality of teaching. They know how well pupils are doing compared to those nationally, including those eligible for support through additional funding. The school provides detailed information on the progress that pupils make. Governors' strategic planning is demonstrated very well in the way that the significant funds raised have been managed to keep class sizes small and have staff to meet the individual needs of pupils. Governors are proactive in seeking training and ask detailed questions that show their understanding of the progress made by all 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	116642
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	432059

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Pratt
Headteacher	Jane Sansome
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2011
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