

Heritage House School

Cameron Road, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 3BP

Inspection dates

27–28 March 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 because:

- The majority of pupils make at least good progress in their reading, writing, speaking and numeracy development.
- Teaching is almost always good and occasionally outstanding. Standards have risen consistently as a result of regular checks by the senior team.
- Teaching and levels of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding.
- Teachers are skilled in helping pupils overcome barriers to their learning caused by their often complex special needs. They know their pupils well and adapt activities carefully to ensure work is set at the right level.
- Pupils of sixth form age make good progress and are well prepared for life after school.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils are generally calm and behave well. This has a significant impact on their good progress. Staff manage behaviour well. There are good relationships between adults and pupils. The pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are outstanding.
- The senior team knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement, although both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are relatively new in post. Together with governors and the local authority, they have ensured that good teaching and progress are being maintained.
- The governing body is well informed about the school and provides a good level of challenge and support to the school's leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to enable pupils to make outstanding progress.
- On occasion, pupils are not given clear enough guidance to enable them to take the next small step in their learning.
- The checking of pupils' progress is sometimes not sharp enough to enable teachers to plan precisely the learning for each pupil so that they achieve as well as they can.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons, all of which were jointly observed with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with teachers, senior and other leaders, four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the school’s regular surveys of parents’ opinions gathered at annual review meetings. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent view) to be included. The inspection team also looked at 38 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents, including self-evaluation and planning. Inspectors looked at records of pupils’ progress, behaviour and attendance since the previous inspection as well as the monitoring reports on the quality of teaching and the curriculum. All records relating to the safeguarding of the pupils were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is of average size for the type of school. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs related to severe learning difficulties with associated complex needs, including those with a diagnosis of autism.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. About a third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- About a quarter of pupils are entitled to additional government funding, because they are either eligible for free school meals or they are looked after by the local authority, and those who need extra help with their literacy and numeracy.
- The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage and a small number of pupils in the 16 to 19 age range. These older pupils are included in the school's 14 to 19 age provision. There is no separate sixth form. There is no early entry for examinations.
- The PACE centre, a private sector provider, is based on the Heritage House site. Pupils attending the PACE centre are on the school's roll but provision for the pupils at the PACE centre was not part of this inspection. On some occasions, pupils from the PACE centre take part in lessons at the school.
- The headteacher has been in post for almost two years and joined the school after the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher has been in post since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that checks on pupils' progress are recorded with sufficient detail to enable teachers to plan precisely, so that pupils can make faster progress
 - ensuring that pupils' targets for the next steps in their learning are clear.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A majority of pupils make good or better progress from very low starting points, in their reading, writing, speaking and in recognition and use of numbers. The school's careful tracking of pupils' performance shows gradual improvement in rates of progress.
- Pupils with severe autism gradually learn to respond to and sometimes initiate communication whether in speech or by the use of symbols. This helps the pupils to make sense of their world and to express choices, and has a significant impact on their enjoyment and achievement. For instance, pupils in Years 8 to 9 effectively demonstrated their confidence in their communication skills by working with an adult to sort plastic and paper materials and to express which pile each article should go on. The minority of pupils with physical and complex disability make good progress through well-planned sensory experiences. Some pupils, however, make less than expected progress because on occasion their targets for the next steps in their learning and the quality of checks on their progress lack precision. This is why achievement overall is good rather than outstanding.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress due to outstanding teaching, particularly in helping children communicate through a range of well-planned activities, carefully set at the right level.
- As pupils progress through the school, they become familiar with symbols and how to use them to communicate. This leads on, in most cases, to simple speech and eventually for a minority to begin to read letters and words. A small number, where this is appropriate, have made good progress in learning the sounds of letters and are beginning to tackle early reading books. Older pupils made good progress in matching printed names to pictures of their friends and adults in their class, often by identifying the initial letter of the name.
- Additional government funding has been successfully used to increase the amount of specialised speech and language work. Pupils have detailed individual programmes overseen by speech and language therapists. This has had a positive impact on their progress and these pupils have successfully narrowed the gap in achievement since the inception of the programmes. The emphasis on communication has also ensured that pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language have made good progress.
- School leaders check the progress of each pupil regularly and provide suitable interventions where necessary to stimulate achievement. The equal opportunity of each pupil to do well is at the heart of the school's work. There is no discrimination.
- Pupils in the 14 to 19 groups follow a recently revised programme of subjects, and are now working towards nationally recognised accreditation in a range of academic, work-related and independence skills. The pupils enjoy and derive confidence from this work, especially as they go out regularly into the community. They are making good progress and are becoming well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is mostly good and occasionally outstanding. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently outstanding and prepares pupils very well to take the next steps in their education. This area is managed outstandingly well. Teaching in the rest of the school, including that of older pupils in the 16 to 19 age range, is good. Teaching standards have consistently improved as a result of regular and detailed checks by the senior team, accompanied by appropriate support where necessary, and comprehensive training opportunities.
- Teachers plan carefully for each pupil and adapt activities so that they are set at the right level. This is possible because of extremely detailed checks on pupils' progress in each lesson. There are high expectations of pupils' effort and achievement, reflected in ambitious targets. Adults

use praise and encouragement successfully to show pupils how well they have done and how to take the next step.

- On occasion, however, checks on pupils' progress are not sharp enough to capture every detail of progress, or to identify difficulties, and this is why teaching is good rather than outstanding. At these times, teachers are unable to plan precisely for the next small step and this can slow down the pupils' learning. At times, the pupils' targets are too generalised and not clearly adapted to the pupils' level of knowledge and understanding.
- Overwhelmingly, however, teachers and additional adults have a clear grasp of how pupils learn best. Adults use communication by speech or symbol use to good effect to enable pupils to achieve well. There are high levels of individual tuition and support for each pupil. Adults are skilled in adapting their teaching throughout the lesson to take advantage of each small gain in the pupils' understanding. This gives the pupils confidence and significantly improves their interest and concentration. On rare occasions, adults do not fully utilise their skills, for instance in not facing pupils to ensure appropriate eye contact.
- There are effective teams. Teachers and other adults work seamlessly with outside professionals such as speech and language specialists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists to promote the physical and communication development of the pupils. Adults benefit from input by PACE staff in the area of physical development for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The pupils' behaviour is good, in the context of their learning disabilities. Pupils are quiet and generally calm and they enjoy their activities. They have good relationships with adults and other pupils because of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. They have positive attitudes towards their education and this helps them make good progress.
- Bullying and racial incidents are unknown. The pupils tolerate others well, they accept turn-taking and gradually learn to listen to and respond to others in the class. As a result, lessons are purposeful. They behave well at lunchtime and on the playground. Adults model acceptable behaviour consistently which has a positive role in showing pupils how to behave well. Staff smile often. The pupils are usually happy and settled. Their attendance is above average.
- When pupils become frustrated or upset and their behaviour becomes challenging it is dealt with professionally and without fuss. Staff receive regular updates on techniques to calm pupils. The school has begun to accumulate detailed records of behavioural incidents. These show that behaviour has improved over the course of a year, due to improvements in teaching and the range of appropriate subjects on offer. The school has evaluated what it offers, and has found that there is still room for improvement in order to make the behaviour of the pupils outstanding. Where relevant, pupils have detailed behaviour plans to indicate how best to help them when they are distressed.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. The pupils are well known to adults who are quick to pick up on any unhappiness or anxiety. Safeguarding arrangements are very secure. Parents express complete satisfaction with the school's arrangements and are confident that their children are safe and happy. Older pupils gain a solid awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They take part in independent travel training and they make regular visits into the community involving crossing the road and behaving sensibly amongst the public. Some pupils are being taught how to use mobile phones safely.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, on his arrival, quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school and through a combination of experience and expertise has ensured that standards of teaching and achievement have consistently risen. The deputy headteacher has given him strong support,

and together they have established a clear direction for the school. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

- There is effective management of staff through robust appraisal procedures based on national standards and accompanied by supportive monitoring of performance and extensive further training. Targets for teachers are challenging and linked clearly to school improvement planning. Teachers' performance is appropriately linked to salary progression based on levels of responsibility and pupils' progress. Teaching standards have risen as a result with just a few inconsistencies remaining.
- Through regular checks on all aspects of the school, leaders have developed a clear overview of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and this underpins detailed planning for the school's future development. Standards of teaching and the pupils' progress are under constant review.
- Through the ongoing support of outside consultants and the local authority, the review of what the school offers has led to a realistic understanding of how to improve still further, to further raise both pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching to make leadership and management outstanding. The rate of improvement is speeding up rapidly and while the school's leaders are well aware of occasional inconsistencies, there is good capacity to maintain the improvement.
- The range of subjects on offer has been extensively revised to add more challenge and relevance to the pupils' activities. National Curriculum schemes of work have been adapted to the needs of the pupils and there is an increased emphasis on basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy, enhanced by many activities to develop pupils' personal and life skills.
- Older pupils in the 14 to 19 age group follow an integrated course leading to accreditation in a wide range of communication skills and development of awareness of the world of work, leisure and personal finance. This prepares them well for life after school.
- Pupils of all ages are able to take part in a range of activities, including visits out and visitors to the school. Pupils particularly enjoy opportunities to go to the stables to take part in 'Riding for the Disabled', a facility operated by the Chair of the Governing Body. These activities contribute well to pupils' academic and personal development skills, physical well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has good partnerships with parents. Annual reviews are very well attended and parents speak highly of the school's work. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the information on pupils' progress and how it compares with similar schools. They critically examine information on all aspects of pupils' achievement and teaching standards and provide positive challenge to the school's leadership. They manage finances appropriately; they have a clear monitoring role in performance management and are well informed about additional government funding and its impact on pupils' progress. Members undergo regular training in, for instance, finance and child protection. They are up to date in regulations regarding the appointment of staff and ensure they maintain strategic management and monitoring of health and safety and the safeguarding of children.

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	110582
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	431594

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Coney
Headteacher	James Boylan
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2011
Telephone number	01494 771445
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