

# Highfurlong School

Blackpool Old Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY3 7LR

**Inspection dates** 1–2 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- It is loved by parents, respected by the community, enjoyed by students and has a staff totally committed to making students' lives better.
- The school meets students' most important needs exceptionally well. Many of their achievements have little to do with attainment in academic terms. Far more important is the wonderful way they make friends, become more independent and learn how to communicate their needs and feelings.
- Teaching is outstanding because day in, day out, students get a good deal from highly skilled teachers. At the heart of teaching is the tremendous understanding that teachers have of the very different needs of students.
- Naughtiness just does not seem to cross students' minds because they are too busy making friends, looking after each other and enjoying life.
- The way that students are constantly told about how to look after themselves and keep safe, rather than expecting other people to look after them, is very special.
- Over many years, leaders, managers and governors have created a stunning school in which students, parents and staff have total faith in what is being done to make young people's lives better. It is a joy to just stand in the school and feel the goodness coming out of it.
- The school has maintained its exceptionally high standards over many years. It keeps improving and retains the capacity to do so. Leaders and managers recognise that while there is outstanding teaching not all staff are sufficiently clear about how they could do even better.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students behave very maturely and take great pride in their studies and work placements.

## Information about this inspection

- Eight lessons and seven different teachers were observed.
- Many discussions were held with senior staff throughout the inspection.
- The acting headteacher was absent during the inspection.
- The inspector got to know a lot about how students feel about life in school; mainly from those who could talk but also from those whose gestures said it all.
- There was a good response to Ofsted's quest to find out about what parents think about their children's schools; (Parent view). Ten parents responded. The inspector also appreciated the views of those parents who made contact during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a school for students who have physical disabilities or profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. There is a trend for more and more students to be admitted with an ever-increasing complexity and degree of need. Many students need personal care in all situations.
- Nearly all students are White British.
- A much higher proportion than average is known to be eligible for the pupil premium. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after).
- Boys outnumber girls by about 3:1; this is usual in schools of this type.
- A long-serving headteacher has left since the last inspection and for the last year the school has had an acting headteacher.
- The school is due to move into new buildings in the near future.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make it clearer to all staff what they have to do to improve by:
  - setting them more specific, more challenging and more precisely measurable targets for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- The most important thing is that students achieve outstandingly well in things that are very important to them and their parents. They make friends and they learn how to look after themselves rather than relying on other people to look after them.
- They make exceptional progress in the way they learn how to communicate. Many have very little speech and a few have very little ability to move. It is wonderful how the school helps students who have no power of speech, and sometimes movement but who, nevertheless, have lots to say.
- Many students are helped to achieve a position of dignity when they learn how to look after their own personal hygiene habits rather than depending on others.
- A few students enter the school at a point in their lives where their learning and personal development are very similar to when they were born. Some transfer into post-16 provision at a higher level. From their starting points though, it is clear that nearly all students are making very big gains in how they understand what is happening to them and what they can do to shape their future rather than having it shaped for them. A display in a classroom for older students sums it up: 'Am I in charge of my life or am I just hoping it will work out somehow?'
- The school receives substantial funding through the pupil premium and accounts for it well. This extra funding is used well to improve the life chances of those who attract it. A careful balance is kept between using this funding for extra learning support and broadening students' social and cultural horizons.
- The school uses the extra money it is given through primary sports funding wisely. It is very evident that the funding is encouraging many students to lead more active lives and, even more importantly, to mix with students from other schools in the many competitions they are involved in.
- A very significant pointer to students' achievement is that the school has a special impact in opening up opportunities for students when they leave. Every student leaves with qualifications that show they have tried as hard as they can and have achieved a lot more than was expected when they came to this school. The most able leave with qualifications that testify to their excellent progress and which, very occasionally include GCSE passes but more normally reflect attainment between Levels 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum.
- Students in the sixth form make excellent progress in learning about life after school and in the workplace. When the day comes for students to leave, sometimes after more than 14 years in the school, they can be seen to understand what lies ahead and are able to make it clear to other people what they want and need but, equally, what they want to do to make a contribution to the world they live in.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of the fact that they have to make sure that students are always learning while taking special account of the extreme physical learning difficulties that they face.
- It is good that teachers know that their job is to teach. Many other people are employed to look after students' care and well-being. Teachers are very good at managing their classrooms to make sure that the constant movement of students in and out of class does not interfere with the purpose of lessons and the progress of students.
- Teachers fully understand the lives that students live and what makes learning difficult for them. They take great care to keep in touch with parents and there are magical moments when students realise that their teachers and their parents are talking about them and working together to make their lives better.
- Teaching consistently displays an acute understanding of the importance of helping students to

communicate. This is very different to helping them to read and write and do sums but, when they are able to, these skills are strongly promoted.

- Every lesson is characterised by teachers expecting students to learn about something they did not know before they went into the classroom. Time is well spent at the start of lessons to check what students already know so that there is not too much repetition of what has gone before and how receptive students might be to pushing things forward.
- Teachers take great care to make sure that their classrooms are inviting. They display examples of students' best work to encourage others to match it. They also take care to not fill walls with information that students do not understand or that could confuse them.
- Leaders and managers constantly check the quality of teaching. Since the last inspection, most of the teaching they have observed has been judged good or outstanding and this is reflected in the excellent progress that students make over time.
- Many lessons are characterised by there being as many adults present as there are students. Support staff are deployed supremely well and know exactly what they are meant to be doing in each lesson.
- Teaching strongly promotes the school's drive to challenge and inspire students and to help them to believe that they can contribute a lot to the community. There is a relentless drive in every lesson to help students feel good about themselves, but, at the same time, teachers rightly make it very clear to students when they have not tried their hardest.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are delightful. They love school, enjoy everything they are asked to do and try their hardest to achieve success.
- Students and their parents feel strongly that this is a very special school. Happiness abounds and students take a big part in this. Older and more able ones delight in their responsibility for looking after younger or less able ones. There are many instances of unexpected and spontaneous little acts of kindness.
- Students take delight in their learning. They are sponges wanting to be soaked and their attitudes are exemplary.
- Students are wonderfully curious about other people who visit their school; they are keen to speak to them and want everyone to know how happy they are and how good the school is.
- Students attend whenever they can.
- Students simply do not misbehave and their attitudes to learning are outstanding. There is no bullying, no harassment and no discrimination of any kind.
- The school's work to ensure that students are kept safe and secure is outstanding. Governors pay particular attention to making sure that this is the case.
- Students benefit from enormous support about how to look after themselves and how to avoid threatening situations, especially in the sixth form. They receive exceptionally good advice but not in a way that makes them fearful.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The acting headteacher could not be present during the inspection. Nevertheless, the school continued to operate extremely well. This confirmed the highly cooperative and effective efforts of all staff as well as the strong impact of leadership on embedding secure and well-established systems that benefit students and reassure parents.
- Everything about leadership and management revolves about making students' lives better while they are in the school and helping them to move on to good things when they have to leave.
- There is a very strong senior management team. There is an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of middle managers, not exclusively teachers. In one instance a teaching assistant is extensively involved in making sure that the school benefits from initiatives promoted through

the legacy of London's Olympic Games.

- All staff are proud to be a part of this school's success. The school is clean and well looked after and administration is excellent.
- There is a constant drive to improve teaching through an excellent programme of training and regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching. All staff are included in formal procedures to evaluate their effectiveness and are set targets against which their performance is measured. Last year, every member of staff met all of their targets. However, some targets are not specific or challenging enough to help all staff, teaching and non-teaching, be clear about how to do even better.
- The excellent curriculum provides equally well for all students and strongly promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders, managers and governors understand that this is what defines the excellence of the school.
- The new school is being funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) as part of the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) and the local authority supports the new purpose built premises.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are kept well informed about the progress of pupils through the excellent reports they are given each term by the headteacher. They are confident that these reports are accurate because many have close association with staff and students and visit the school frequently. Governors are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and are keenly involved in asking what is being done to build upon the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. Selected governors monitor and manage the performance of the headteacher rigorously. Governors are fully aware that progression for staff through the pay scale is tightly linked to the effectiveness of their performance. The governing body pays very close attention to how highly valued extra funding is used to encourage participation in sport or to support those who have fewer advantages in life than others. It makes sure that the school meets all statutory requirements, especially those relating to the safety and safeguarding of students.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119868
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	444568

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	49
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	22
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joan Lamb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rosemary Sycamore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 April 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 392188
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