

# Chiltern Gate School

Verney Avenue, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP12 3NE

**Inspection dates** 5–6 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide inspirational leadership. Staff morale is high. Members of the school community know exactly what is expected of them and there is a clear determination that all pupils should achieve well.
- Teaching is good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly knowledgeable about pupils' different and complex needs. This information is used to ensure activities are set at the right level to suit every pupil.
- Pupils throughout the school, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those who join the school later on, achieve well. The majority of pupils make good or better progress.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Their attitudes to learning are positive, and they are enthusiastic about the wide range of activities and experiences on offer. Pupils greet staff with smiles and affection, demonstrating their sense of safety and well-being.
- The whole of the school day is designed to provide pupils with opportunities to develop and extend their communication skills, to promote their social and emotional development as well as to ensure academic development.
- The arrangements for keeping pupils safe, particularly those who are at risk of not doing so well, are highly secure.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe, well looked after and provided with a unique education. The school works closely with parents and carers providing individual advice and support as well as workshops and family events.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A very small minority of less-able pupils do not make enough progress.
- A very small minority of teaching continues to require improvement.
- Marking and feedback do not consistently give pupils sufficient feedback on how to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team carried out observations in 17 lessons, including three jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the lead inspector and deputy headteacher made a series of brief visits to classes throughout the school. Inspectors also observed lunchtimes and visited a variety of clubs. Pupils' workbooks and records of achievement were sampled in every class. A number of detailed case studies were completed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of the extended leadership team, teaching staff, teaching assistants, governors and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection.
- A wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, the sports funding action plan, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, and information relating to pupils' progress and attainment, behaviour and attendance, was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with groups of parents and carers during the course of the inspection and took account of the views of 18 parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- As this inspection began as a monitoring inspection, questionnaires were not circulated to staff and so their views were collected during conversations held during the course of the inspection.
- When the school was inspected in December 2012, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school received four monitoring visits. On the occasion of this, the fifth monitoring visit, the school was no longer deemed to require special measures.

## Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson

Seconded Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with complex needs including moderate learning difficulties, communication and language disorders, and those with a diagnosis of autism. Many pupils also have a range of medical difficulties and all have communication difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Over half of all pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, with over half of these being of Pakistani heritage.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The school offers boarding during the week for a small number of pupils. This aspect did not form part of this inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has been appointed as substantive headteacher. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013. There have been significant changes to staffing and leadership structures. The school has undergone an extensive building and refurbishment programme.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more is outstanding and all pupils make good or better progress by:
  - increasing the consistency in the quality of marking and feedback so that it is fully relevant to each pupil and provides clear advice of what to do to make further progress
  - consistently delivering lessons that provide suitable challenge for all the pupils, particularly the least able.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well as a result of the many interesting and exciting opportunities on offer. Skilled staff make learning fun and ensure that no matter what their need, children are given access to a wide variety of experiences. All children learn to communicate in different ways; this means that the very youngest children play a key role in teaching one another so that no child is isolated. This was observed during a physical education session where a coach, and teaching and support staff, used a range of spoken communication and picture clues, and children demonstrated how to make 'star shapes' to their peers.
- All groups of pupils, including those with a diagnosis of autism, moderate learning difficulties, and severe and complex learning difficulties, achieve well. The majority, but not quite all, of pupils are currently making faster progress and achieving more than might reasonably be expected, including in English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, emotional and physical development. This is because staff are skilled at assessing pupils' educational starting points and set ambitious individual targets. Lessons are carefully tailored to interest, stimulate and challenge pupils to repeatedly take the next small, but vital, steps in learning.
- Over time, the gap in achievement between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and all others has been too wide. The school's information indicates that this gap has reduced most significantly in English and in personal, social, emotional and physical development. The gap is closing less rapidly for least-able pupils. This is why achievement is not outstanding.
- There is no significant difference between the overall performance of girls and boys or pupils from different minority ethnic groups compared with their peers. This demonstrates the school's total commitment to ensuring that every pupil has equal opportunity to accessing an education that is well tailored to their needs.
- Every part of the school day is used to maximise learning for the pupils. At lunchtimes, pupils sit at tables in small groups with enough adults to help pupils learn, whenever possible, to feed themselves, to make selections from healthy food choices and in practising essential communication skills. When pupils have finished eating, they take part in daily activities such as choir, computer club or indoor sports, which allow pupils to extend their personal interests, to work alongside peers of all ages and abilities, and to enhance vital communication skills.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and in physical education. Pupils benefit significantly from frequent trips and visits. For example, visits to a supermarket have enabled pupils to put learning about money and shopping into practice. The array of sporting opportunities in school and within the local community has allowed all pupils to experience new activities and to increase their skills, with some joining local clubs and discovering new talents.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now good and sometimes outstanding. A very small minority of teaching continues to require improvement. As a result of consistently good teaching, and superb extra-curricular activities and care, the majority of pupils make good or outstanding progress.
- Pupils respond well to the range of resources provided to support communication, including individualised communication books, picture exchange systems, communications boards, signing and speech. Because of improved communication, pupils make faster progress socially as well as in all subject areas.
- Daily routines are well established in all classes. Class and individual timetables ensure pupils are clear about what is happening at each point during the day and the tasks that they are to undertake. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils will behave and what they will achieve. Classrooms and the outside areas are well ordered and attractively presented, which

further promotes pupils' interest and engagement.

- Thorough and continuous checking provides a comprehensive picture of pupils and their progress. Teachers' lesson planning is clear and individualised for each pupil, building systematically on their previous learning. Pupils are given work that is appropriate to their unique point in learning.
- Strong teacher subject knowledge, as well as carefully planned activities, contributes to pupils' good progress. Staff work closely as a team in each classroom. Teaching assistants are absolutely clear about their roles in supporting learning and are highly effective at identifying and recording progress through observational notes and photographs. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to improving their own skills and constantly apply and refine their own new learning. This contributes to pupils' particularly good rates of progress.
- New approaches to the teaching of reading and English were introduced in September 2013. At these times, pupils are taught in groups according to their reading ability, with diverse activities to stimulate interest in reading and writing as well as to improve key skills. For example, pupils may take part in dancing or painting activities to promote gross and fine motor skills while others are challenged to write on their own about superheroes or characters from a story.
- Pupils have made faster progress in reading, and in all subject areas, this academic year than previously. This is due to a focus on improving the teaching of reading and English.
- Outdoor learning is used widely. Horticulture, horse riding and trips into the community are regular aspects of school life. In mathematics, science and English, teachers also make best use of the outdoor area, conveying the message that learning and high expectations for positive behaviour are not confined to the classroom.
- The quality of recording in pupils' workbooks has improved hugely since the previous inspection. There is a good quantity of work in pupils' books recording and demonstrating learning in different ways. Teaching is not outstanding, because while workbooks are regularly marked, the marking is not always relevant to, or clearly understood, by pupils. Pupils are not consistently provided with opportunities to respond to the feedback; therefore, some opportunities to make even more progress are missed.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically, pupils are happy and welcoming. They respond positively and enthusiastically to adults, and make positive gains in their learning and how to manage their behaviour.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently. A merit system enables pupils to work towards a range of small daily and weekly rewards. These merits are highly prized, and pupils demonstrate great excitement and pride when they receive the merit tokens.
- Staff training and daily dialogue among staff ensure that adults understand some of the more complex barriers to learning and behaviour, and that support and intervention are appropriate and regularly reviewed.
- Many pupils have individual behaviour plans. These identify triggers to, and descriptions of, likely behaviours. The plans provide clarity about how best to respond to individual pupils, ensure that staff react consistently, and that pupils, and parents and carers, know what support or intervention will be provided under different circumstances.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school provides a warm, structured and reliable environment for pupils. Parents, carers and staff often notice huge improvements in their children's behaviour over time. The school's open-door policy to parents and carers is highly valued. They regularly seek help and advice about their concerns.
- Staff are highly trained in safeguarding. Pupils who might be at risk of not doing as well as their peers have an identified member of staff to ensure that additional plans and support are securely in place, and that communication between different agencies is effective and up-to-date.
- Activities and outings such as the whole-school trip to the cinema and the forthcoming

residential visit are carefully planned and supervised so that risks are understood and minimised. Staff ensure that pupils feel safe by clearly explaining everything to them, so that they know what is happening, when and how.

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence in staff, greeting them with smiles and affection. Pupils told inspectors that they are happy and safe in school. Pupils spoke about all adults, including those in minor supporting roles, with great warmth.
- Pupils learn about behaviour and safety, including discussing bullying and safety when using the internet. Pupils are encouraged to seek help or advice if they have any concerns. A constant thread of safety and well-being is woven throughout the curriculum and school environment.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because from time to time some pupils are reluctant to take part in the learning activity. At these times, pupils require significant support and direction to refocus on the task.

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

- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is inspiring. They are ambitious and uncompromising in their drive to achieve excellence in every aspect of school life. Major improvements in pupils' achievement and behaviour, in the quality of teaching and the range of subjects on offer, and in leadership at all levels, have been secured.
- Leadership and management are shared widely among staff. New leadership structures have been introduced, including an 'extended leadership team', which includes subject leaders and teaching assistants. As a result, there is a great sense of clarity and shared responsibility about what more must be done and how to secure outstanding achievement for the pupils.
- A strong culture of training and development is firmly embedded. Performance targets for staff are linked directly to pupils' achievement and targets within the school's improvement plan. Checks on staff performance are undertaken regularly and this information is used to inform decisions on teachers' pay. Teachers welcome formal and informal visits from senior leaders and colleagues as they know that resulting discussion, advice and training will increase their skill and further benefit the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants aspire to excellence and the provision of outstanding education and care for their pupils.
- The culture of continuous improvement and ambition, to provide outstanding education for pupils with wide-ranging needs, extends far beyond the school. The headteacher, with the support of other leaders and staff, has led initiatives to share best practice within the local authority and schools further afield. In particular, Chiltern Gate has initiated and hosted 'moderation exercises' for special schools, whereby staff from different schools have come together to look at and assess pupils' work, generating a better understanding of what pupils with different need types can achieve.
- Clarity of expectation has been achieved through a shared and written understanding captured in the documents: 'What is good learning at Chiltern Gate School?' and 'What is good support at Chiltern Gate School?' These documents describe clearly what constitutes good and outstanding learning, and good and outstanding support. Consequently, checking, planning and support seen across the school are of a consistently high quality leading to raised achievements.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly check the work of the school and, as a result, they have a detailed and accurate picture of the school's effectiveness and its priorities for further improvement. Pupils' progress is tracked frequently and systematically, and information is screened rigorously to ensure pupils do not fall behind and to discover if even more could be achieved.
- Leaders, staff and the governing body seek to work with, and welcome, parents and carers at every opportunity. Increasing numbers are attending the range of workshops, celebratory events and fairs on offer. There is now an active 'friends' groups as well as parental representation on the governing body. Parents and carers receive detailed information regarding their own children plus reports on the progress of the school as a whole. All those spoken to, including those who

completed the online questionnaire, are unanimous in their high opinions of every aspect of the school.

- The range of subjects has been reviewed and now operates on a two-yearly topic cycle. Subject leaders have worked together to ensure pupils will appropriately gain new knowledge and increase their skills in each individual subject area, while studies are linked under topic titles such as 'What a performance!'.
- Additional government funding provides activities such as horticulture and horse riding, as well as extra support within the classroom and for group work. The physical education funding has been used to buy specialist sports coaching including in trampolining, dance and cricket, and to take pupils out to take part in sporting events within the community. Activities are carefully evaluated to ensure they provide value for money and really make a difference to pupils' learning experiences.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is dynamic, rigorous and effective. The governing body is well informed about the school's work and knows about the quality of teaching and arrangements for performance management. Governors bring an array of relevant skills and experiences to their roles, combining a supportive problem-solving approach with a high degree of challenge and questioning. The governing body receives detailed reports from the headteacher and senior staff. Knowledgeable and well-trained, with a strong understanding of school data, governors are in a strong position to question and assess critically what is reported. Governors know what is going well in terms of pupils' achievement, and how this compares to similar schools and to national data. They are clear about where to seek further improvement. Any underperformance has been rigorously tackled and, with support from consultants, the headteacher is set challenging targets. Committees and individual governors have clear roles and responsibilities including specifically for safeguarding. Governors are trained in safe recruitment. Positive relationships exist with staff, pupils, and parents and carers. The management of school finances is now a particular strength, including the use and impact of additional government funds.

## 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>	110578
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	441601

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	103
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	8
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alex Eaden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bradley Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4–5 December 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 532622
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