

# The Loyne Specialist School

Sefton Drive, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 2PZ

**Inspection dates** 24–25 June 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.

- For many years the school has been recognised as a centre of excellence by the local authority, the community and Ofsted. It has worked relentlessly to build on this reputation and keep giving its pupils the best possible opportunities for success.
- Nearly all parents think very highly of this school and the way it helps and inspires their children. Staff are proud to work here and pupils love attending.
- In this school, when pupils are asked for their opinions they respond by asking for fewer holidays.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well. Every tiny step of progress is perceptively noted, recorded and sent to hugely grateful parents.
- Teaching is outstanding. It nearly always fires up pupils' thirst for learning and helps them to do their best. A particular strength of teaching is the way that teaching assistants are so successfully deployed to help pupils in their learning and behaviour.
- Pupils behave wonderfully well. They are cheerful. They help and support each other with compassion and try as well as they can to learn as much as possible.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe and well looked after and for good reason. They are given a huge amount of excellent advice about how to look after themselves and who to go to if they are worried about anything.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for moving on with greater independence and the chance to make decisions for themselves.
- Leaders, managers and governors ensure that teaching and achievement are first rate and are determined to make the school even better. They are particularly good at helping promising inexperienced teachers.
- Many schools in the area are extremely appreciative of the help they are given for supporting pupils with special educational needs in their own school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw all but one teacher engaged in teaching. They visited all classrooms and saw all groups of pupils being taught. Twelve lessons were observed and 11 different teachers.
- Many informal communications were made with pupils and staff. A few parents also talked to inspectors. Inspectors took into account the views of parents who responded to the school's own questionnaire as well as those who responded to Ofsted's own on-line questionnaire (Parent view).
- Inspectors met with four governors and a consultant who supports and advises the school.
- Wherever possible, samples of pupils' work were looked at to support inspectors' views about teaching and learning.
- The environment in which pupils learn and play was carefully checked.
- The way that the school makes sure that all pupils are kept safe and their rights respected was checked.
- Systems for checking up on the effectiveness of teaching were checked.

## Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Most pupils have severe, profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. A few have life-limiting or deteriorating medical conditions. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a trend for more and more pupils to be admitted with an increasingly complex degree of need. There is a rapidly increasing proportion of pupils with autism. Many need personal care in all situations.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked-after children). There are currently seven looked-after children.
- About three fifths of the pupils are boys.
- Sixth-form pupils often attend other places away from school that offer education and training. The main one of these is Lancaster and Morecambe College. Others are More Music, DT3 (Dukes Theatre), Beaumont College and Wennington Hall. Employment links are with the Lancashire Business Partnership, the Red Cross, Morecambe Library, Leighton Moss, Supported Employment Services and Transition Services.
- The school has Teaching School status. Many staff speak at local and occasionally national conferences. Staff from the school support 26 different mainstream and special schools through the 'Loyne Alliance'.

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

- Although the school has little to do to improve itself further, it is very well placed to help train and support staff in other schools with pupils who have particular needs and could consider extending this work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- On entering the school, all pupils have significantly below average attainment in relation to their age. Many of the youngest are at the very earliest stages of learning and development. This sometimes includes others who are older. Some pupils joining the sixth form are more able, but still need a lot of help to develop the skills to live independently. All pupils leave to positive destinations, usually college or training.
- The school has an exceptionally thorough approach to treating every pupil as an individual. It carefully checks the achievement of different groups, but pays particularly close attention to any individuals who are not making the progress expected of them. When this happens, a huge range of highly effective support is provided to remedy the situation. Staff check progress with great precision and carefully evaluate the effectiveness of all actions taken.
- Not all pupils can record work for themselves, but when they can, they take great pride in doing so neatly and carefully. Some exercise books clearly demonstrate the rapid progress that pupils are making, for instance as they move on from tracing over words to writing by themselves. Other work shows them copying the shape of a letter, learning its sound and then learning how to combine that letter and sound with others as they take the first steps in learning how to read.
- In mathematics, younger and less-able pupils learn how to sort objects and put them in order. By the time they leave, many of the more able know how to spend money and check their change. All the work pupils are given builds very precisely on what they have previously learned. This is done with great precision and means that however small the learning steps may be, they accumulate into clearly evident progress.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked-after children do every bit as well as all other pupils. Ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity lies at the heart of the school's work. Extra money to promote sport and exercise amongst primary pupils is well spent on skilled coaching and high-quality resources.
- Pupils in the sixth form build exceptionally well on what they have learned lower down the school. There is a very strong shift to promoting personal skills and encouraging independence. For example, in one display, sixth formers were seen visiting a supermarket, weighing goods then paying for them with five and ten pound notes. Many benefit from college courses and work experience placements. These contribute enormously to helping them to develop employability skills.

### The quality of teaching

**is outstanding**

- Teaching is consistently exceptional. This quality extends to all situations. Sometimes pupils learn in large class groups, sometimes on a one-to-one basis. On occasions, teaching is well led by teaching assistants, both indoors and outdoors.
- Teachers plan for learning with great precision. They refer to what a pupil already knows and then set very precise and challenging targets for individuals. Throughout lessons they constantly check that individuals know what they are doing. If the work appears a bit too easy, they quickly adapt to give those individuals harder work; if it appears too hard, they direct skilled support to give additional help.
- Approaches which include the imaginative use of resources, including computers and photographs, greatly adds to pupils' enjoyment of learning. For the least-able pupils very skilled use is made of special resources to help them learn at a sensory level and communicate their learning to adults through using simple switches of gestures.
- All staff are highly skilled in promoting communication skills. Pupils who can speak are always expected to do so. Others are helped by learning how to use signs, symbols and pictures to communicate their needs and choices. Staff are very good at identifying which methods work best.

- Teachers take great care to ensure that they create the right environment for learning in their classrooms. They make sure, for example, that there are not too many distractions, but take care not to make their classrooms too stark or clinical.
- Behaviour is expertly managed. Staff are very aware of the typical behaviours exhibited by individuals, especially those with autism. They are very perceptive in noticing the early signs that something may be troubling a pupil and employ a wide range of approaches to try to avoid any escalation.
- Pupils' work is very carefully marked and progress noted. Books and files contain perceptive comments about pupils' work and what they need to do next to make it even better. Many pupils cannot read these comments, but they provide an excellent record for teachers and parents to refer to.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Parents, staff and the pupils themselves are almost unanimous in saying this is the case. The only significant incidents are those that relate to pupils' assessed needs, for example, related to those with autism. These rare incidents are always dealt with promptly and successfully.
- Playtimes are a joy to behold. The school has invested heavily in its grounds and has created a veritable wonderland of well-equipped play spaces. Older and younger pupils mix well. Some play with great energy, such as on the newly made cycle track; others relish the opportunity for a bit of solitude. Pupils take great care to look after and help each other; a wonderful example of this was a sixth-form girl who was supporting a new pupil on her first day in school.
- The school is very peaceful. Pupils move around sensibly. More-able pupils often help those in wheelchairs to move around the school. Pupils work hard in class and concentrate very well. There are lots of smiles and pupils are clearly thrilled when they achieve success.
- There is no record of any bullying or harassment and pupils respect one another's rights.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils are given an enormous amount of help and advice to keep themselves safe. They know who they can rely on to help them if they are troubled by anything. Older pupils are taught how to travel independently and what to do, for instance, if things do not go according to plan. All pupils learn about road safety.
- Many sixth-form pupils have completed first aid and food hygiene training.
- A very close eye is kept on keeping pupils well-informed about the importance of using technology safely and avoiding unwanted attention from strangers.
- Pupils attend whenever they can and many would like to be able to attend even more. Summing this up, one pupil, when asked what he would like less of, responded 'holidays'. Any absence is very promptly followed up and it is usually for medical reasons.

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

- Exceptional leadership, management and governance are pivotal to the success for the school and its outstanding provision and outcomes. The quest for improvement never stops. It is relentless. Change is managed in very small steps, but lots of them. This means that routines and systems are fully understood by pupils and staff and this helps the school to run exceptionally smoothly.
- Leaders and managers have a crystal clear understanding of the school's effectiveness and are full of ideas about possible new initiatives. They fully understand that for change to be effective, it has to be accompanied by improvement in pupil outcomes as well as in matters such as the quality of teaching.
- Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. This process includes observing lessons as well as an extensive programme of other checks, such as the quality of teachers' marking,

planning and record-keeping. Many different staff, including middle managers as well as senior ones, play an important role in this process.

- The school has great success in recruiting suitable staff because leaders, managers and governors have a very keen eye for recognising potential. Looking at records that go back several years, it is clear how keen, new staff have been very well supported and trained and how, as a result, their performance has improved.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form are led and managed exceptionally well. Teachers lead large teams of assistants with great skill and manage their classrooms expertly. Outstanding work is currently being done by the Loyne Alliance to support pupils and staff in many other schools. This extensive work is managed exceptionally well, is proving very successful and could be extended.
- Parents are almost universally happy with the school and the vast majority would unhesitatingly recommend it to other parents. They have every confidence that their children are being well looked after, well taught, making good progress and behaving well.
- Pupil premium funding is used highly appropriately. Some is spent on additional support for learning or behaviour. It is also used to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all activities, including trips, after-school activities and holiday events.
- Pupils love all the different things that go on every day in the very varied timetable. Staff are increasingly keen to develop more opportunities for outside learning.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. The school draws on a huge range of other professionals to make sure that pupils are emotionally as well as physically safeguarded.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has elected to reconstitute itself in line with current legislation that allows it to tailor membership more precisely to the specific needs of the school. Governors are kept exceptionally well informed about school developments by the headteacher. They know how good the teaching is and how well pupils are doing. They are very involved in finding out for themselves why things are as they are, because many actively participate in activities and events run by the school. Many individual governors have valuable skills. Some have a long and successful background in education, others have financial acumen or expertise in technology and the environment. Governors play an important part in checking on the performance of staff, including the headteacher, and making sure that high performance is suitably rewarded and lesser performance remedied. They keep a very close eye on how additional funding, such as primary sport funding and pupil premium money, is spent and to what effect.

## 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> | 119892     |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Lancashire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 439648     |

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>                    | 2–19                    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                   |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 110                     |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 41                      |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body      |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Anne-Marie Houghton     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Carol Murphy            |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 10 June 2010            |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01524 64543             |
| <b>Fax number</b>                             | 01524 845118            |
| <b>Email address</b>                          | info@loyne.lancs.sch.uk |



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