

Amwell View School

Station Road, Stanstead Abbots, Ware, SG12 8EH

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outstanding leadership and management have led to outstanding achievement and teaching across the school.
- The inspirational headteacher, with excellent support from school leaders and good support from governors, is highly effective in driving school improvement.
- Leaders have already revised their curriculum and have almost completed the development of their own systems of assessments. These are on course to be implemented in the spring term 2015.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to learning and participate fully in all school activities. The school's efforts to ensure that pupils are safe are outstanding.
- Outstanding teaching has a very strong impact on pupils' learning and their progress over time.
- Teachers make excellent use of signing, visual timetables, symbols and extremely well-chosen resources to ensure that pupils with different learning needs are absorbed in their activities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for learning. They work well together to support the learning of individual and small groups of pupils in lessons. They create a very positive atmosphere for learning, manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well and have excellent relationships with pupils.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Across the school, pupils make at least good and often better progress across a range of subjects. They make outstanding progress in communication, personal, social and health education, reading, number, music, art and physical education. The oldest pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education, with 100% transferring successfully to the sixth form.
- Outstanding teaching with excellent planning in the Early Years enables children to make very rapid progress and settle into their routines extremely smoothly.
- Outstanding leadership of the sixth form has led to outstanding learning and progress of students as a result of excellent provision. Students are extremely well prepared for their lives beyond school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons to look at the strengths of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning over time. Twelve of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across the school and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject and phase leaders, two members of the governing body and different groups of pupils. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at 30 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents) which included four comments. They also took account of email correspondence sent by a few parents to the school, the school's most recent survey of parent views and 45 questionnaires returned from staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school self-evaluation summary, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding policies, records of behaviour, attendance figures, information about children's progress in the Early Years, pupils' progress over time, and the progress and destinations of students on leaving the sixth form.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aileen Thomas

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Some have additional needs, such as multi-sensory impairments. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Just over half of all pupils have autism, which is a significant increase since the last inspection, and approximately one fifth have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Most pupils are White British and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional funding for pupils entitled to free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or from where one member of their family is serving in the armed forces.
- No pupils attend alternative provision for part of their education.
- Since the last inspection the school has increased its roll and taken in pupils with more complex needs. A second deputy headteacher was appointed in October 2013 and a new middle leadership team has been created. The school has developed strong links and partnerships in the Eastern Region Special Olympics movement and Amwell View is the lead school in the training of teachers through School Direct. A sensory studio was built in 2013 and outside exercise areas improved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement the new curriculum and new arrangements for assessment by spring 2015.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Under the transformational leadership of the headteacher the school has sustained outstanding leadership and management since its previous inspection. It continues to be at the forefront of national developments, such as the phased transfer of pupils from statements of special educational needs to education, health and care plans. Senior leaders and other teachers with leadership responsibilities provide excellent support for the headteacher in sustaining high quality teaching and learning, and driving improvements forward. As a result, there is a very strong culture which enables all pupils to do extremely well, and their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning to flourish.
- The school has an accurate view of itself and uses this information to provide clearly targeted priorities for school improvement. These are based on sustaining high levels of achievement for all groups of pupils through high quality teaching and learning.
- Robust and highly effective arrangements for managing the performance of teachers, which are clearly linked to the national teaching standards, are in place. Rigorous and regular monitoring of teaching through lesson observations, pupil progress meetings and scrutiny of pupils' work is outstanding. Strengths in teaching and any areas for development are accurately identified and fed back to staff. Valuable and highly effective support is provided where any weaknesses in teaching are identified, which has led to sustained excellence in teaching since the previous inspection.
- Teachers with leadership responsibility have been working closely with senior leaders to develop the new curriculum and systems for assessment. They are on course to implement these in full by the end of next term.
- A rich and stimulating, broad and balanced, and highly relevant curriculum is in place. Every pupil across the school from the Early Years to the sixth form greatly benefits from an individualised curriculum with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills and their personal, social and health education. These are clearly set as personal targets which provide the right level of challenge to extend each pupil's thinking. Children in the Early Years follow the six areas of learning and pupils from Key Stages 1 to 4 follow a wider range of subjects which build on their prior learning and include careers education for the oldest pupils. This enables them to successfully transfer to the sixth form, where students follow a highly effective programme to develop their independence skills, to make choices and prepare them for life after school.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals such as the school nurses, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, together with equally strong links with social services and educational psychologists, greatly benefits pupils' learning and well-being.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a programme of well-thought-out assemblies where pupils' experience great enjoyment and have excellent opportunities for reflection and the celebration of success. They are developing an increasing awareness of British values. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties often experience a sense of wonder through well-planned sensory activities. Pupils learn about different cultures by, for example, participating in different music clubs such the choir and rock club, and singing in the Royal Albert Hall along with other Hertfordshire school choirs. They learn more about different sports in their community by participating in a wide range of sporting activities through, for example, the Special Olympics group and performing African dance movements in the dance studio. Topics such as drug abuse, within the programme of personal, social and health education, and the clear system of rewards and sanctions within the highly effective code of conduct enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong.
- Leaders make excellent use of the primary school physical education and sport premium in buying in to local sports partnerships. These enable pupils to participate in dance festivals, project ability festivals for those in wheel chairs and multi-skills festivals. Pupils at Key Stage 2 benefit from the sports leadership course linked to other local schools and, as a result, many pupils led a festival as sports leaders. There has also been increased enjoyment and engagement in lunchtime and after-school sports clubs.

- Leaders make excellent use of pupil premium funding to provide additional individual or small group support and additional speech and language therapy support. These support pupils' development of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and communication. As a result, these pupils make at least the same consistently good and outstanding progress as their classmates.
 - Year 7 catch-up funding has also been used well to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy for pupils, enabling them to accelerate their progress.
 - The local authority provides appropriate light touch support for this outstanding school and the school benefits from the using the local authority services.
 - The school has strong links with parents as seen, for example, in the very high attendance of parents at the recent transition evening. All parents who completed the online questionnaire would recommend this school to others and this was also reflected in the school's own survey.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors are providing good strategic oversight of the school's work and supporting staff effectively. They have carried out an audit of their own skills and contribute positively to the school's development planning. They have a good knowledge of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning through receiving reports from the senior leaders, by looking at data and through regular visits to the school. They have good oversight of the arrangements for managing the performance of the headteacher and ensure that the best teaching is rewarded.
 - Governors have recently approved the new curriculum policy which includes the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development and a clear statement about the promotion of British values. They have also agreed procedures for tackling extremism, should it occur. They are ensuring all legal requirements for safeguarding the welfare and interests of pupils are in place by updating policies, ensuring training is up to date and that procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors are rigorous. They look at data when considering the impact of spending of additional funding such as pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding on the learning and progress of these pupils compared to their classmates. They also examine the use of the primary school physical education and sports premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Exclusions of any kind are extremely rare. Pupils are consistently well behaved in classrooms and around the school. Those with more challenging behaviours make outstanding progress in gaining self-control and re-engaging with learning in a very short space of time. Behaviour is always managed exceptionally well by staff as pupils respond most positively to the consistent application of rewards and sanctions. As a result, any kind of disruption is rare. Their excellent behaviour impacts exceptionally well on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they grow rapidly in confidence. They are increasing their awareness of the importance of good behaviour at home, in school and in society.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and always try their very best in lessons. Their books show that they take a great pride in their work and make every effort to complete the tasks set for them. Their excellent attitudes are reflected in their high participation in all school activities and their good attendance, which is monitored very effectively.
- Pupils have excellent relationship with adults and show kindness and respect to each other. They are courteous and polite to adults. Pupils are confident to go to any member of staff if they feel worried about any issues, including any extremist views they might be exposed to outside of school. Given the nature and complexity of their learning disabilities and difficulties, bullying or harassment of any kind does not occur.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. High levels of supervision and engagement of adults in children's learning in the Early Years ensures that they are always safe. Pupils move very safely around the school from one area to another. They are extremely well supported to abide

by safety rules in team games and in handling equipment, such as utensils, tools and computers very safely. They play very safely at break times and always move safely in the dining room. Students in the sixth form learn to travel safely and independently. Rigorous procedures are in place to check the suitability of staff and visitors to work with children.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils' written work, the school's information about pupils' progress over time and learning seen in lessons demonstrates that teaching over time across a range of subjects and in all key stages, including the Early Years and the sixth form, is outstanding and never less than consistently good. As a result all pupils, including those with autism, and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the disadvantaged and the more able, are making sustained progress leading to outstanding achievement.
- All teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for learning as seen during visits to lessons, annotated photographs of pupils' achievements and from the school's own monitoring of teaching over time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants were seen working well together in all lessons to support the learning of individual and small groups of pupils, ensuring that tasks were carefully matched to each individual pupil's learning needs and breaking tasks down into smaller steps. They make very good use of ongoing assessment to redirect learning and record the gains pupils make in learning, especially towards their individual targets. Annotations of pupils' work to show progress and identify the next steps for learning are of high quality.
- All adults working in the classroom create a very positive atmosphere for learning and manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well, as seen in lessons and in the school's monitoring of teaching over time. Staff maintain excellent relationships with pupils.
- The teaching of communication, literacy and numeracy is very effective. It is promoted well across a range of subjects such as religious education, personal social and health education, music, physical education, science and technology.
- Teachers' excellent use of signing, symbols and visual timetables was seen in every lesson and reflected in pupils' work. Resources are of very high quality and extremely well chosen, as seen in music where percussion instruments were used to represent the sound of falling rain and a thunderstorm. As a result, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties greatly enjoyed their experiences and were thoroughly focused on their learning.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils at Key Stages 1 to 4, children in the Early Years and students in the sixth form, including those with autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties and multi-sensory impairments, make significant and sustained progress. As a result of outstanding teaching and highly effective support to individualise learning, they learn exceptionally well.
- Children enter the Early Years with very low levels of attainment arising from their severe learning difficulties. They make outstanding progress in all areas of learning because excellent leadership has assured excellent planning and delivery of high quality provision.
- Pupils' work and assessment profiles, together with visits to lessons, show that they make consistently good and often outstanding progress across different subjects. They make outstanding progress in communication as a result of highly effective support and joint planning by teachers and speech and language therapists. They make exceptional progress in personal social and health education because this permeates the life of the school and is seen in pupils' rapidly growing self-confidence, their eagerness to

learn and their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strong emphasis on reading, as seen in the wide range of books pupils read recorded in their reading records, enables them to make outstanding progress.

- Pupils sing and perform in a range of concerts, including at the Royal Albert Hall, and compete in a range of sporting events with other special schools, sometimes acting as sports leaders. In these events, they demonstrate their outstanding progress in music and physical education. All the students in the sixth form who were entered in the newly introduced Arts Award in 2014 gained the award showing outstanding progress in art over time.
- The oldest pupils and students are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their lives, demonstrated by all Year 11 pupils transferring to the sixth form and all students leaving the sixth form for secure destinations in further education or residential provision. They follow a range of accredited courses and careers education to promote their independence and prepare them for life beyond school.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium make the same outstanding progress as their classmates in communication, literacy and numeracy as a result of highly effective additional support for their learning. This is also reflected in disadvantaged sixth form students gaining slightly more Youth and Arts Awards than their classmates.
- The relatively more-able pupils have opportunities to excel, for example in becoming sports leaders to lead different sporting festivals with other schools.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in a wide range of sporting events. In 2014 they participated in 319 off-site sporting activities, including dance. They enjoy exercising and make outstanding progress in sport such as boccia, tennis, wheelchair activities and football.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The achievement of children in the Early Years is outstanding. They make consistently high rates of progress academically, personally and socially in relation to their very low starting points. They rapidly settle into their routines and make excellent progress in communication skills through the consistent use of signing, symbols and communication aids. This prepares all children, including those with autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the relatively more able, extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching over time is outstanding and meets the learning needs of all pupils very well. Thorough assessments when children enter the school ensures that activities for each child are exceptionally well planned to create rich and imaginative experiences that meet the needs of all children extremely well. Through high quality observations, staff have detailed knowledge of each child's need and use this most effectively to extend learning and development within the well-equipped, welcoming and highly stimulating environment. Small steps of progress are meticulously recorded and shared regularly with parents, who are fully engaged in their child's learning at home.
- Children are very happy and most eager to join in with their activities. They display high levels of concentration, imagination and curiosity about the world around them. They stay extremely safe and their behaviour is outstanding because staff consistently apply the robust policies and procedures to ensure children's health, safety and well-being.
- Outstanding leadership and management with accurate evaluation of the provision and highly focused training for all staff has resulted in a rigorous drive to maintain the highest levels of achievement for all children over time.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- The achievement of students in the sixth form is outstanding resulting from outstanding teaching over time. This leads to excellent attitudes to learning enabling all students, including those with autism, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, disadvantaged students and the relatively more able, to make excellent progress academically, personally and socially. All students, including the disadvantaged, successfully complete their Youth Award and Arts Award study programmes. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and training, with a strong emphasis on work related learning and careers education. This, together with strong college links, enables students to transfer successfully to further education or residential college provision when they leave school and sustain their places one year on.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning, make outstanding progress in their behaviour and do their very best to stay as safe as possible with high levels of adult support. They respect and support each other.
- Highly effective leadership of the sixth form ensures that staff have high aspirations in developing students' independence skills and building their confidence so that they actively contribute to the community. They work extremely well together as a team to make excellent use of well-chosen resources within highly organised and well-chosen activities to promote learning and ensure the utmost safety of students. New systems of assessment are in an advanced stage of development and due to be implemented in spring 2015.

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	117684
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	448147

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	123
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe McCarthy
Headteacher	Jan Liversage
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
Telephone number	01920 870027
Fax number	01920 871664
Email address	head@amwell.herts.sch.uk

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