

Samuel Pepys School

Cromwell Road, St Neots, PE19 2EZ

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership and management from the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have sustained good achievement and teaching since the previous inspection.
- The new headteacher is providing strong direction for the school and enjoys the confidence of staff, governors and parents.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. The school's efforts to ensure pupils are safe are also good.
- Pupils' learning is mostly good as a result of mainly good and sometimes outstanding teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers maintain very good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well. There is strong team work and careful planning between teachers and teaching assistants to support learning.
- Teachers make good use of signing, symbols for communication and practical resources, such as electronic switches and visual timetables, to enable pupils with more complex learning needs to access learning.
- Achievement is good. Pupils make outstanding progress in communication and reading and good progress across a range of subjects including personal, social and health education. Older pupils are well prepared for transfer to the sixth form.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are achieving well as a result of good teaching, well thought-out learning opportunities and good leadership and management.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well and are fully prepared for the next stage of their lives as a result of good teaching. Good leadership ensures that students become confident and independent by the time they leave school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few cases, pupils do not always know how well they are doing or how to improve their learning in lessons.
- Teachers with subject leadership responsibilities are at an early stage in developing the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed most teachers and looked at the impact of teaching on pupils’ learning in the 12 lessons visited. Eight of these were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work and heard a small number of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers with leadership responsibilities, four governors, a local authority representative and different groups of pupils. Informal discussions took place with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) including a small number of comments. They also took into account 42 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school self-evaluation and school development plan, governing body minutes, safeguarding policies, records of behaviour and attendance, records of progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, information about pupils’ progress over time and the destinations of students leaving the sixth form.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terence Cook

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Samuel Pepys School caters for a wide range of special educational needs. These include complex communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe and moderate learning difficulties. A significant number of pupils also experience physical and sensory difficulties and have complex medical conditions.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost all pupils are White British and a very small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above average at around two fifths of pupils. This is additional funding for pupils entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A significant number of pupils join the school other than at the usual times of admission.
- All pupils at Key Stage 4 attend Shuttleworth College for part of their education. Students in the sixth form attend Huntingdon Regional College and Ernulf Academy for part of their education.
- All pupils are taught in mixed ability classes. The small number of children in the early years are taught alongside pupils in Year 1. The school provides an outreach service for local primary and secondary schools. It also manages its own after-school club.
- A new headteacher started in September 2014 following the retirement of the previous headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the few remaining weaknesses in teaching, increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise achievement by making sure that:
 - pupils always know how well they are doing and how to improve their learning in lessons
 - teachers with leadership responsibilities work closely with senior leaders to develop the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- In a short space of time, the new headteacher has already gained the confidence of staff and governors in establishing a clear vision for developing the school further. She receives good support from senior leaders and teachers with leadership responsibilities. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views on leadership in the staff questionnaire returns and the views of those parents who completed Parent View. It is also seen in the timely way in which the headteacher has identified the first group of pupils who will transfer from statements of special educational needs to education, health and care plans.
- The school's view of its effectiveness is accurate and based on the outcomes of close and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders. These outcomes are used to robustly manage the performance of teachers. The objectives set for improving teachers' performance are securely derived from the national standards for teaching and based on raising pupils' achievement through good or better teaching. Good teaching is linked to salary increases and good support and training is provided to overcome any weaknesses. Newly qualified teachers also receive good support and training to develop their professional skills further.
- Leadership of the outreach service, which is recognised as a highly supportive and valued service by local schools, is good. Leadership of the early years and the sixth form are also good. Teachers with subject leadership responsibilities are reviewing their subjects in order to develop new arrangements for the curriculum and assessment, but this work is at an early stage of development.
- The curriculum takes into account the needs of each individual pupil. It is broad and balanced and covers a wide range of subjects. There is a major focus on developing the skills of communication, literacy numeracy and personal, social and health education across the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the sixth form. Older pupils and students follow a programme of careers education, work-related learning and independence skills. This enables them to make well-informed choices about their future and to prepare them well for leaving school.
- A range of examination courses are available for pupils at Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form. These are well matched to their different learning needs. Key Stage 4 students and sixth form students benefit from good experiences within the community such as working in local charity shops and developing their horticultural and animal husbandry skills at Shuttleworth College and Huntingdon Regional College.
- Strong partnerships with therapists, health professionals, the educational psychology service and social services enable close planning and team work to ensure that pupils' well-being and learning are enhanced. Strong links with special schools enable teachers to check the accuracy of their assessments so that individual plans for pupils are effective.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well. This happens through a range of assemblies and topics within religious education and personal, social and health education. It is also further developed through subjects such as music, dance, geography, food technology and art. For example, in a primary achievement assembly, pupils sang, chanted and moved to an African song and pupils prepared different foods from around the world in food technology.
- Pupils learn to take turns and develop their social skills in activities such as team games. They also learn to recognise the importance of good behaviour and safety outside school. They have good opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain through local visits to St Neots, trips to London and through school council elections.
- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used well to provide a range of additional therapies, including speech and language therapy, as well as subsidising trips and residential visits. This has led to good improvements in pupils' communication skills and in their personal development.

- Primary sports funding is used effectively. It has been used: to train teachers in teaching swimming, to purchase additional playground equipment such as skipping ropes and a bicycle, to develop positive playtime leadership skills and provide sports coaching. As a result, pupils have increased their physical exercise at playtimes and are improving their physical education skills, such as swimming.
- The local authority is providing good support and challenge for the school through regular visits to review the school's work and to agree targets for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are providing good support for staff and challenge for the school's work. They have carried out a review of their own work and have used this effectively to develop their own monitoring skills as governors. Through focused visits, they have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of the school's data and use this to consider the progress different pupils are making. They effectively challenge the school's use of the pupil premium and primary sports funding. Governors oversee the arrangements for managing the performance of the headteacher well and ensure that any increases in salary for teachers are linked to the quality of teaching.
 - Governors have good oversight of the school's arrangements for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of British values, through for example, visits to assemblies. They also ensure that the school is meeting the legal requirements for safeguarding pupils' interests and well-being through regular checks on vetting procedures and making sure that policies and training in safeguarding are up to date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They respond admirably to staff, who manage their behaviour consistently well. As a result, those pupils with more extreme and challenging behaviours make good progress in their conduct over time and disruption in lessons is rare.
- Pupils' good behaviour has a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they build their self-esteem and become more confident during their time in school. They have a developing awareness of why it is important to behave well in schools, on school trips, in the work place and at home.
- Pupils say there is no bullying and that if it did occur it would be dealt with effectively. They know about different types of bullying and know who to go to if they are worried about anything. Pupils, parents, staff and governors believe that behaviour in the school is good. Pupils are considerate towards others and are polite and respectful to adults and visitors.
- Pupils feel good about their learning and are eager to participate in lessons and school activities although occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration during lessons. Nevertheless, their positive attitudes are seen in the neat presentation of their written work and in the way they show pride in their achievements. This is also noted in their good punctuality and attendance.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school has well developed and very effective systems for monitoring attendance with immediate contact with home if a pupil is absent. Unusual patterns of absence which might impact on a pupils' well-being or safety are identified early and appropriate action is taken.
- The school has clear procedures for dealing with discrimination of any kind, including derogatory language should it ever occur. Pupils abide by the rules of safety in using practical equipment and when participating in team games such as the primary and secondary sensory circuits seen during the inspection. Pupils play safely at break times and move safely around the school.
- The school ensures that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are kept safe and secure through, for example, strict control of the use of photographs taken in school by staff to illustrate children's

achievements. All potential risks are thoroughly assessed for school trips and when pupils attend alternative provision. Older students in Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form learn how to travel safely when they cycle to school or when they travel independently on a bus or train.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching over time enables pupils to learn effectively and make good progress. Evidence from the schools' own monitoring of teaching, progress information and teaching observed jointly during the inspection indicates that the quality of teaching is good. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning make a good contribution to their progress.
- Good use of signing, communication symbols and practical resources were seen in all lessons and also seen in evidence gathered to show pupils' progress over time. Pupils with more complex learning needs used technological communication aids to communicate their responses. Teaching assistants and teachers used sign language to enable those with poorly developed communication skills to communicate effectively. In all classrooms visual timetables are displayed and pupils with autism and communication difficulties benefit greatly from the use of pictures and symbols.
- Team work is strong and all lessons are carefully planned with teaching assistants so all staff are aware of their roles in supporting the different learning needs of pupils. Teachers were observed working closely with teaching assistants to manage behaviour and learning effectively, this was confirmed as regular practice in the school's monitoring records of teaching over time.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for different groups of pupils with differing needs. They focus on developing communication and social skills and breaking tasks down into small steps.
- The teaching of basic skills of literacy numeracy and communication are at least good. Communication skills and reading are taught exceptionally well with a strong emphasis on teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) as seen in reading records. Homework is set as appropriate. Many pupils take home reading books to consolidate their reading skills.
- Observations of teaching by senior leaders over time and school data shows that occasionally teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding. Although staff have good knowledge of each pupil and use this well in planning, pupils are not always informed how well they are achieving or how to improve their learning in lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with very low levels of attainment due to the severity and complexity of their special educational needs. Good leadership ensures children make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly in communication skills, as a result of good teaching and well-planned activities.
- Pupils' work and the school's information about their progress show that they make good progress over time. They make outstanding progress in communication skills and in reading because these are consistently well taught and supported by all staff.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development, mathematics, writing and other subjects such as computing, physical education, music and food technology.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form make good progress at Shuttleworth College, Huntingdon Regional College and in their examination courses at school. There has been a significant increase in the number of entries to examinations since the previous inspection. They also make good progress in independence skills, careers education and work-related learning. This prepares them well for their transfer to college, day-care provision or residential placements, when they leave school. Over the past three years nearly all pupils have sustained their places, which is testament to their good progress

during their time in school.

- Different groups of pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, additional physical and sensory difficulties and with additional complex medical conditions, make equally good progress as their classmates. This is because effective individual support is well planned with other professionals to promote their learning. This is also seen in the good progress they make towards their individual targets over time.
- Pupils benefit from good use of the primary sports funding. At break times they were seen to exercise vigorously, using bicycles and skipping ropes as well as other playground equipment. Pupils are developing good skills in swimming and coordination and balance during their sensory circuit training.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making at least the same progress as their classmates and occasionally they are doing better in English and mathematics. This is mainly because of good support from teaching assistants with additional support from therapists. As result, there are no gaps between their attainment and other pupils in school or nationally.
- The relatively more able pupils with only moderate learning difficulties are making equally good progress as their classmates, which is better than the progress they were making at the previous inspection.

The early years provision

is good

- The achievement of children within the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All groups of children, including those with complex communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe or moderate learning difficulties make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Good leadership has ensured good quality teaching and support for all children. All staff plan well together so that each child has an individual programme of work in each area of learning. This enables all children to enjoy their learning and make good progress. For example, children with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoyed their sensory experiences watching and blowing bubbles and some began to make sounds. Other children sang a song with staff during their 'What's in the box?' activity experiencing a sense of excitement.
- Staff carefully track the progress each child makes and share this information with parents. They ensure that children are safe through close supervision and by getting involved in children's learning activities. They promote children's emotional health and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They do this through consistent use of praise and encouragement and good management of behaviour, including establishing consistent routines. As a result, children settle in quickly.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students are achieving well and making good progress towards their examination courses and in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is because teaching is good, the curriculum is planned well and leadership and management are effective.
- Students benefit from good careers education, highly relevant examination courses which develop their independence skills and an effective work-related learning programme. This enables each student to make informed choices for their future lives.
- Staff maintain very good relationships with students and manage their behaviour consistently well through the consistent application of rewards and sanctions. This was seen in swimming lessons where staff consistently encouraged students to develop their swimming techniques and to challenge

themselves to do even better.

- Leaders ensure that all potential risks while students attend Ernulf Academy, in activities such as swimming and in the development of independent travel by bus, on the train or in cycling are fully assessed. They also ensure that transition beyond school is good, college links are strong and students have good opportunities for community involvement.

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	110951
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	447951

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	93
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Knight
Headteacher	Joanne Hardwick
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2012
Telephone number	01480 375012
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