

Harlow Fields School and College

Tendring Road, Harlow, CM18 6RN

Inspection dates 16–17 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		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide good leadership and management. Together, they have sustained good teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher is providing clear direction for the school and is receiving good support from the staff and governors.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have good attitudes to learning. The school's efforts to ensure pupils are safe are outstanding.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching over time ensures that pupils' learning and progress are good.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to plan interesting learning activities for different pupils. They make good use of signing, symbols and well-chosen resources to ensure all pupils learn effectively.
- Teachers manage behaviour well and maintain good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are respectful, listen carefully, follow instructions and are well motivated to learn.
- Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and in other subjects, including personal, social and health education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Pupils with autism make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress in communication. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with sensory needs make outstanding progress in sensory awareness.
- Children in the early years make outstanding progress because the impact of teaching on their learning is outstanding. Outstanding leadership and management have led to the creation of strong links with parents, excellent use of assessment and a rich variety of experiences.
- Students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage of their lives and make good progress. Good leadership ensures that teaching is good and students develop their independence when they leave school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Very occasionally, staff do not extend the thinking of a few pupils with moderate learning difficulties sufficiently well.
- Leaders are at an early stage of developing the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 10 lessons to look at the impact of teaching on pupils’ learning. Six of these were jointly observed with senior leaders. Most teachers were seen.
- Inspectors heard a few pupils read and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two governors, the local authority representative and two different groups of pupils. Informal discussions also took place with a few other pupils at break time and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at 11 responses to Parent View, including five who made comments, and examined the school’s most recent survey of parents. They also considered the responses in the 20 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding procedures, records of behaviour, attendance figures, the school self-evaluation and school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, information about pupils’ progress over time, records of children’s progress in the early years and the destinations of students leaving the sixth form.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Harlow Fields School and College provides for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs arising from severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. A few pupils have moderate learning difficulties and a small proportion have additional complex medical or sensory needs.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and significant number of pupils join the school other than at the usual times of admission.
- The majority of pupils are White British. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a broadly average proportion 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.
- All students in the sixth form attend Capel Manor College in Enfield to learn horticulture as part of their education.
- Since the last inspection there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder referred to the school, and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- An interim headteacher has very recently been appointed.

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:
 - staff always extend the thinking of the few pupils with moderate learning difficulties
 - leaders complete the development of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The interim headteacher provides good leadership and direction for the school. She receives good support from senior leaders and teachers with leadership responsibilities in improving important aspects of the school's work, particularly teaching and learning. Together they are creating a strong culture in which high quality teaching and good behaviour flourish.
- Teachers with leadership responsibilities effectively monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time and use this information well to contribute to whole school improvement.
- The school's view of its effectiveness is accurate and securely based on the outcomes of monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. These are used effectively in the management of teachers' performance and for setting clear priorities for whole-school development. Any weaknesses in teaching are supported, and good teaching is linked to salary increases. Newly qualified teachers benefit from good support to further develop their teaching skills.
- The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and takes into account the needs of each individual pupil. There is a strong emphasis on developing communication skills, literacy, numeracy and personal social and health education for all pupils.
- Older pupils and sixth form students follow a well-thought-out programme of careers education and work-related learning and examination courses. This enables them to make informed choices about their futures. Students in the sixth form follow vocational courses, such as horticulture at Capel Manor College, and organise a school café as a small enterprise. The sixth form leader rigorously monitors the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending Capel Manor College.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a series of assemblies, religious education lessons and through subjects such as music, dance and art. There are good opportunities for reflection. Pupils' moral development is promoted through the consistent application of the code of conduct. They have good opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain through a range of topics in citizenship.
- The new curriculum and assessment arrangements are at an early stage of development. Leaders have identified the first groups of pupils to transfer from their statements to education, health and care plans.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional support for literacy and numeracy, for additional speech and language therapy support and for subsidising school trips and visits. It has a good impact on pupils' learning and well-being.
- The additional funding to enable Year 7 pupils to catch up in literacy and numeracy is used well. It has been spent on purchasing a new reading scheme and in funding a 'maths puzzle week' to enable pupils to make good progress in reading and to increase their enjoyment of mathematics. This is reflected in the good progress pupils make in mathematics.
- The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations among pupils and with the adults and tackles discrimination well.
- Good use is made of primary physical education and sport funding to extend the range of sports clubs and physical education equipment and to pay for sports coaches to broaden the range of physical education activities across the school. The impact of this spending has been to increase pupils' levels of exercise and participation in sport.
- The local authority provides good levels of challenge and support for the school, through, for example, regular reviews of its work. This is valued by staff and governors.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are extremely effective and fully meet statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are effective. They know their own strengths and areas for development and are using this information well to improve further. They have a realistic knowledge of the quality of teaching by examining reports from the school and through regular visits. They use data well to challenge the school's work, especially its additional spending on the pupil premium, primary physical education and sport funding and Year 7 catch-up funding. They also use this to influence priorities for school improvement and the performance objectives of the headteacher. They have good oversight of what the school does to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance.
- Governors ensure that the legal requirements for safeguarding are very robust. They are extremely well implemented, through the rigorous review of policies and regular checks that all staff and visitors are thoroughly vetted. All training is up-to-date. Governors have good oversight of the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development, including the promotion of British values.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They respond positively to the consistent management of their behaviour. Pupils with extremely challenging behaviours make good progress in their conduct during their time in school. Incidents of disruption in lessons, and exclusions from school, are rare.
- Pupils deepen their understanding of why good behaviour is important in school, at home and in society. Their good behaviour has a positive effect on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they learn to share, to take turns and to respect others. They develop good relationships with one another and are polite and courteous to staff and visitors. They increase their confidence and self-esteem during their time in school.
- Pupils say there are few incidents of bullying, which are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. They are increasing their awareness of different types of bullying and feel confident to go to any member of staff if they feel worried about anything.
- Pupils enjoy learning; they are keen to join in school activities and are eager to learn. This is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. Pupils' positive attitudes are also reflected in the pride they take in their achievements and in the neat presentation of their written work.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All potential health and safety risks in school and on school trips are thoroughly assessed. The school has developed rigorous and highly effective systems for promoting good attendance, with immediate contact home when a pupil is absent. They rigorously check for unusual patterns of absence which might impact on pupils' safety or well-being, and act immediately, involving local agencies as appropriate.
- Pupils move safely from one area of the school to another. High levels of staff supervision ensure pupils stay very safe at break times and lunchtimes and when on school trips. Pupils handle practical equipment and use computers safely.
- Children in the early years stay extremely safe and secure. This is as a result of excellent team work among staff in engaging children in safe play, in using resources safely and in moving safely between the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Students in the sixth form learn how to travel safely, to prepare and store food safely in order to avoid bacterial infection and to use equipment, such as gardening tools, safely. Thorough assessments of any potential risks are carried out when students attend their alternative provision at Capel Manor College.

The quality of teaching is good

- Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning over time is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils and manage pupils' behaviour well. As a result, pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons have a positive impact on their progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of assessment in planning support for different pupils. They use well-chosen resources, such as photographs, symbols, signing and real objects to ensure that pupils with more complex learning needs access learning and make equally good progress. For example in a literacy lesson, good use was made of photographs of the character Puck in *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* to generate enthusiasm for writing about his character. Teachers use visual timetables, real objects and linked symbols to words well to promote communication and engage pupils.
- Teaching assistants provides good support for pupils with more complex learning needs by breaking tasks down into smaller steps and focusing on developing pupils' understanding of technical words and new ideas.
- Good teaching of the basic skills of literacy, reading and numeracy means that pupils make good progress. Staff hear pupils read every day to check on their progress, and encourage them to take home their reading books. They teach phonics (the sounds that letters make) well. Good use of real-life practical activities in mathematics, such as measuring the height of different people in a class and recording this information on a bar chart, stimulates pupils' learning. Communication skills are taught well, and teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder is sometimes outstanding.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the different needs of their pupils and use this information well to challenge their thinking. However, on a few occasions, they do not extend the thinking of a very small number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- School data about pupils' progress and observations of teaching over time by school leaders show that not enough teaching is outstanding and, occasionally, teaching requires improvement. This is because very occasionally teaching does not stretch the learning of pupils.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the early years with very low levels of attainment due to the complexity of their special educational needs. Outstanding leadership and teaching ensure that children settle in rapidly, quickly sustain high levels of concentration and make outstanding progress in each area of learning.
- The school's information about pupils' progress over time and work in their books clearly demonstrate good achievement over time especially in reading, writing, mathematics and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make good and, sometimes, outstanding progress in communication because signing and the use of symbols, practical resources and visual timetables are used consistently well by staff. The school's information about progress over time shows that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with more complex sensory needs make outstanding progress in sensory awareness.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form make good progress in their examination courses, in developing their independence skills and in work-related learning. As a result, students are well-prepared for the next stage of their lives. All pupils in Year 11 transfer to the sixth form successfully and all students in the sixth form transfer to colleges, day care or residential placements when they leave school. They nearly always sustain their placements one year on. Students who attend Capel Manor College are making good progress in horticulture.

- Disadvantaged pupils make the same progress as their classmates in English and mathematics as a result of good additional support from teaching assistants and therapists. As a result, there are no gaps between their attainment and other pupils in the school.
- Good use of the primary physical education and sport funding has led to pupils' increase in exercise and improvements in physical fitness and well-being.
- More able pupils with moderate learning difficulties make equally good progress as other groups. However, pupils' work shows that occasionally the thinking of a few of these pupils is not always extended sufficiently.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management of the early years have resulted in very strong team work among staff and excellent links with parents and other early years providers. This ensures that all groups of children with different learning needs make outstanding progress in all areas of learning.
- As a result of outstanding teaching and support children, who had only been in school for five weeks, were already settled into their routines. They concentrated fully on their activities and thoroughly enjoyed their learning, despite the severity and complexity of their special educational needs.
- Outstanding teaching and support enable children to make excellent progress in learning and prepares them exceptionally well to start Year 1.
- Staff use their observations of children's learning exceptionally well to track and record the small steps of progress each child makes, helpfully sharing this with parents. Children are very safe, secure and happy in school. This is as a result of high levels of supervision, together with the consistent implementation of policies to promote children's welfare. This also promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. All staff quickly establish dependable routines to enable children to settle very quickly into school.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Good leadership of the sixth form ensures that students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives, that overall teaching is good and that students are always safe and secure. All potential risks while students attend Capel Manor are rigorously assessed and students learn to travel safely and independently.
- A well-conceived curriculum ensures that students are making good progress towards their examination courses, in developing independence skills and in improving their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, their participation in a local drama production in the Harlow Theatre of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and their skills in running their own mini enterprise café are building their confidence and promoting enjoyment.
- Staff manage behaviour well and maintain good relationships with students. As a result students abide by the code of conduct and develop good attitudes to learning.
- Good careers advice and a programme of work-related learning prepares students well to make informed decisions for the world of work and college placements. Good links with colleges and good opportunities for community involvement ensure that transition beyond school is smooth.

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	131838
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	447973

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Surtees
Headteacher	Kathleen Wall (Interim Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
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