

Ash Lea School

Owthorpe Road, Cotgrave, Nottingham, NG12 3PA

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The headteacher has worked tirelessly to drive improvement. Together with other senior leaders she has introduced many new procedures to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- An innovative behaviour management system is having a positive impact on improving the challenging behaviour of a few pupils.
- The governing body has a good range of skills which they use well to manage the budget and to form an accurate view of the school's work.
- Parents are very pleased with their children's progress.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. They say they feel safe and secure.
- New improvements to the range of subjects offered meet the needs and abilities of pupils well.
- Effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that their personal development is good and prepares them well for their futures.
- Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Strong relationships and well-planned tasks engage pupils well.
- Pupils across the school make outstanding progress in communication because of the very strong focus on the use of signs, symbols and technology.
- Pupils' progress in reading and writing is good and most pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Children get off to a positive start in the early years provision.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students gain a range of appropriate qualifications.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Tasks are not always set at the right level for pupils, especially in mathematics, and this can slow their progress.
- Although the school has worked diligently to improve the accommodation, it does not meet the needs of all pupils and this sometimes has a negative impact on their progress and on their behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, some of them jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, they also listened to some pupils reading.
- The inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and watched them at play in the playground.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' work.
- The inspectors took account of the 35 parent and carer responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View). They also spoke to several parents at the school's Harvest Service. The 40 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Kathy Yates

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who are supported by a statement of special educational needs for their severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The number of pupils at the school has increased recently and there is now a higher proportion with a diagnosis of autism and associated challenging behaviour than previously. A few others have additional sensory or physical difficulties.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after.
- Additional primary school sports funding is provided for primary-aged pupils.
- The school does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Alternative off-site training provision for the sixth form students includes the use of a shop in Nottingham and a local school.
- Children in the Reception class are full time.
- The school is part of the Nottingham Cotgrave partnership of local schools. The school has a sporting partnership with Rushcliffe School.
- The school does not enter pupils early for examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tasks fully match pupils' abilities, so that they make even better progress, especially in mathematics.
- Continue to work closely with the local authority to improve the accommodation so that it fully meets the wide-ranging needs of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the governing body have successfully ensured that pupils receive a good education. As a result the achievement of all groups is at least good.
- Leaders ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in communication by providing rigorous staff training in the consistent use of signs, symbols and technology. As a result all groups of pupils have a voice.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' achievement in reading and writing is good. Achievement in mathematics is more variable but is improving.
- Key leaders and managers, including middle leaders, have high expectations and are fully committed to improvement. They are working diligently to ensure that new pupils quickly settle and make good progress. However the accommodation is too limited to meet the range of pupils' needs and this sometimes impacts on their achievements.
- The school's view of its own performance is thorough and accurate. Policies are well thought out to ensure that pupils make at least good progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Governance is supportive and helpful. Members regularly challenge leaders. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements are improving.
- Together with the governing body, leaders model high professional standards in their work and have created a culture of high expectations for all pupils.
- The effective range of subjects on offer engages pupils well and ensures that they enjoy learning. This contributes well to pupils' academic achievements, their physical skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Together, these aspects promote good behaviour and understanding of safety well. Leaders promote tolerance for all pupils and help them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain through their study of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles.
- Effective systems for checking pupils' progress have been developed, ensuring that all pupils' achievements are regularly assessed. As a result, any pupil falling behind can quickly be supported to improve. Disadvantaged pupils now achieve as well as their classmates in English and mathematics, and sometimes better. This is because the pupil premium is used effectively to support eligible pupils individually and in groups. Equality of opportunity is assured for all pupils, and there is no discrimination of any kind.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and the few who spoke to an inspector said that they cannot speak highly enough of the school and the members of staff.
- Partnerships with other schools have improved because of shared funding for sports. This has enabled pupils to take part in shared activities and to receive training from experienced staff to improve their skills.
- Procedures for setting targets for teachers are fully established and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded unless staff have met their targets, based on pupils' progress. As a result, leaders have improved teachers' skills.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have regular training in aspects such as the use of signs and symbols, ensuring consistent practice across the school.
- The local authority has worked effectively in partnership with the school to improve the ways that special schools checks on how much progress pupils are making.

- Although the school has worked thoughtfully to improve the premises, weaknesses in the accommodation regularly impact of pupils' learning and on their behaviour. This is particularly evident in the provision for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, those with challenging behaviour, children in the early years provision and those in the sixth form.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements and leaders ensure that members of staff are well trained in identifying pupils at risk of harm.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because there is a little more to do to make sure work is set at the right level in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school well and provides good support and challenge to leaders. Governors are fully involved in checking teaching and behaviour and looking carefully at how well pupils are doing. They regularly check the effectiveness of the school, so that they know what is working well. Governors have received training and have a good range of skills which they use to benefit the school. They understand the use of data and know how it compares with similar schools. Frequent checks on the evaluation of pupils' achievement through the school's review of its performance, ensure that governors know how effective the school is. Good management of finances means that the additional government funding is used to improve the learning of those pupils for whom it was intended. It is used well to provide additional support and resources so that eligible pupils' achievements and progress are as good as those of their classmates, and sometimes better. Governors rigorously ensure that the best teachers and staff are rewarded and they understand the process of setting targets for teachers well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is evident in and around the school. School documentation is thorough and any incidents are recorded.
- Pupils' good behaviour is promoted by positive relationships with members of staff and between pupils. There are some marked improvements in behaviour over time for individual pupils. They say that they really enjoy school.
- Low-level disruption is rare but occasionally the challenging behaviour of a few pupils disrupts the learning of others, particularly where classrooms are crowded or too small for purpose. This is why behaviour and safety are not outstanding.
- Pupils told the inspectors that there is no bullying of any kind at the school. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are promoted well by the good range of relevant learning for all groups. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions in the past two years.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development is good, through the positive support that they receive and the exciting activities they experience.
- Effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils includes good quality links with other schools. Pupils mainly understand right and wrong and there is a balanced approach to pupils' broadly Christian religious education which encompasses world faiths. This was very evident as all pupils joined in with their own 'harvest rock' during their 'Harvest Festival' church service.
- Pupils are prepared well for their lives after leaving school through their good quality achievements and accreditation.
- Students in the sixth form, and those in the early years provision behave well in lessons and in their free time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Children in the early years setting are safe and secure in class and in the outdoor play area. Those in the sixth form are safe and secure in their accommodation.
- Older pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe and said that they know about the importance of staying safe in the community and while using the internet.
- Risk assessments are of good quality and ensure that pupils' individual needs are fully taken into account for any activity or visit.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress in most subjects, including literacy, reading and mathematics because teaching over time is consistently good. School records show that the proportion of good teaching is improving because of high quality training and rigorous checks by leaders.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good or better progress. Expectations in lessons are high, ensuring that pupils deepen their knowledge in order to make good progress in their areas of learning.
- Reading and writing are taught well and communication is taught outstandingly well. For example, in the younger age groups staff make excellent use of signs and symbols to ensure that pupils understood what is expected. This resulted in excellent progress as pupils were able to make valid choices.
- Good levels of support in literacy helps pupils to improve their skills so that they can complete their tasks and make good progress. The teaching of reading is effective because of the regular teaching of sounds and letters (phonics) and reading practice. As a result, the most-able pupils achieve well and can read simple stories.
- Good use of resources to guide writing helps pupils to gain confidence, whether they use symbols or words, or whether they tell their ideas to an adult.
- The teaching of mathematics is not as strong as it is in English. School data confirm this. It is mainly because tasks do not always meet pupils' individual needs. As a result teaching is not outstanding.
- Pupils' work is regularly checked and marked. This is often verbal but is always typically helpful, giving examples of how pupils can improve their skills and what they could try next time. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The pupils' attainment on entry is usually well below that expected for their age, because of their learning difficulties. However, progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects is consistently good and evidence shows that pupils achieve well at the school.
- All groups of pupils, including those who receive additional funding, those with a diagnosis of autism, or sensory or physical difficulties, achieve equally well.
- Just occasionally, pupils' achievement dips slightly. This is particularly evident in mathematics when pupils find tasks difficult because they are not matched well enough to their abilities.
- Progress in communication is outstanding because the use of signing, symbols or modern technology to support pupils' speaking and communication skills are evident at all times. Visual timetables for example

were used extremely well in Years 4 to 6 enabling pupils to be fully aware of what was expected of them.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is similar to, and sometimes better than, that of other pupils in the school so that gaps between pupils are closing. Pupils with additional special educational needs receive effective support to enable them to work alongside their classmates. They make similar progress because of the additional expertise provided for them.
- Pupils' sports skills are improving due to additional funding that has enabled the school to pool its resources with other schools to provide extra coaching. Pupils are developing very healthy lifestyles because they are able to take part in physical activities regularly and are challenged by their inclusion with other pupils.
- Children in the early years provision and students in the sixth form achieve well.

The early years provision is good

- Children in the early years provision get off to a good start to their school lives and make good progress. They benefit from appropriate accommodation and enjoy playing in the classroom with their older classmates.
- The quality of teaching is good and all adults plan activities that are set at the right level. For example, children made outstanding progress in learning their letter sounds during their daily phonics session. This was because of high quality use of switches, symbols and pictures that enabled children to respond.
- Expectations are high and children's learning opportunities are well organised. The planning contributes well to the development of children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies are implemented well so that children are safe and secure. Staff work extremely well with parents, keeping them fully informed about their children's welfare and progress.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the importance of staff training and development so that all staff have appropriate qualifications to support children. Monitoring is regular and ensures that there is continuous improvement. Leadership of the early years provision is good.
- Children behave well and most are beginning to interact with adults and other children.

The sixth form provision is good

- The sixth form is good. Leaders have an accurate view of the sixth form. Programmes and accredited courses are in place and these meet students' individual needs and abilities well.
- Relationships between students and members of staff are good. Adults who work at the school are proud of their students and keen for them to do well. Students are well supported in lessons and in their free time. Members of staff are friendly and students know that there is always someone to talk to.
- Progress is good. It is not yet outstanding because students do not have sufficient opportunities to be independent. Although the school has worked diligently to improve the accommodation, the lack of a common room, for example, means that they cannot take enough responsibility for themselves.
- The sixth form curriculum ensures that students have opportunities to learn about the wider world. They have regular trips, for example, into the local area and wider afield.

- Achievement in English and mathematics is good because of the high focus placed on these areas. Students in the sixth form make good progress on their accredited courses.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and relevant to the ages of the students. Work is checked regularly to ensure that students are making progress.
- Students' behaviour is good and they told the inspector that they enjoy the sixth form. They feel safe and secure in their accommodation.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The curriculum has recently been re-structured to better meet students' needs and to help ensure that the level of challenge is appropriately linked to literacy and numeracy.
- Vocational studies include enterprise opportunities such as occasionally running a shop in the town.

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	122957
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	448143

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
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	78
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex McDonald
Headteacher	Dawn Wigley
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 March 2010
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