

Heltwate School

Heltwate, North Bretton, Peterborough, PE3 8RL

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Despite having had four headteachers since the previous inspection, senior leaders and governors have continued to provide a good education for the pupils.
- The headteacher is providing outstanding leadership and there has been a significant improvement in teaching and achievement as a result of the rigorous monitoring and tracking procedures that he has introduced.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The activities are well matched to individual students' interests and abilities and provide a range of both academic and work-related options.
- Teaching is good and an increasing amount is outstanding because leaders ensure there is training for staff at every level across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Relationships between all staff and pupils are excellent and there is a very positive climate for learning. Pupils work enthusiastically together and respond positively to challenge.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure in school.
- There has been significant improvement in the way adults assess and record information about pupils' progress in English and mathematics. The school can now demonstrate that pupils make good and increasingly outstanding progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of creative and artistic activities. The very positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of school life add hugely to the learning experiences and enjoyment that pupils gain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able pupils are not given the opportunity to gain GCSE or Entry-Level qualifications in a wide enough range of subjects.
- Not all subject leaders have developed their monitoring systems sufficiently to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress in their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 16 lessons across the whole school, all of which were jointly observed with senior staff. They also carried out other shorter visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, literacy subject leaders, members of the student council, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors talked informally to pupils and students, and heard some pupils read.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school, including pupils' behaviour, and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own self-evaluation and development plans, information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring, safeguarding and attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, and pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at the responses from parents. They reviewed the 17 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, and a parent survey conducted by the school. They also considered the 47 responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heltwate School caters for pupils across the primary and secondary age range who have been identified as having either moderate or severe learning difficulties.
- In September 2012 the school created a sixth form known as Olympic College. It had its first intake of Year 14 students in September 2014.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Around a third come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest minority group is of Pakistani heritage.
- An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. At least 15 different languages are spoken by pupils at home.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Approximately a third of the pupils have an autistic spectrum condition and some pupils have physical difficulties with complex medical needs.
- Half the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils in local authority care or known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is above the national average.
- There have been four changes of headship since the previous inspection in March 2011. The present headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2013.
- The school does not use any alternative provision but the sixth form students attend a link course at Peterborough City College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, can achieve a wider range of qualifications that are relevant and appropriate to the next stage of their education.
- Ensure that all subject leaders adopt the effective monitoring procedures and practices that are being used by the literacy leaders so they can quickly identify any pupils at risk of not making expected progress and take steps to make sure they catch up.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is providing very clear direction to the school and receives good support from senior leaders and governors in driving improvement. Together they have ensured that all staff are committed to improving teaching and learning and raising pupils' achievement. This has led to a culture in which pupils want to do well, and where very good behaviour and attitudes towards learning flourish. The school has very good support from parents, and this is reflected in both its own surveys and in Parent View responses.
- The roles and responsibilities of the senior staff and teachers are clearly defined and all teachers now have responsibility for leading a subject. The monitoring of the teaching of literacy across the school is particularly rigorous. It involves lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and pupil progress meetings. Other subject leaders are beginning to adopt similar practices but these are not so well developed.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The rigorous monitoring system that has been introduced by the headteacher is bringing about a systematic improvement in the quality of teaching so that there is now an increasing amount that is outstanding.
- Staff have considered the new National Curriculum and have adapted it so that it meets the specific needs of the pupils. Although many of the pupils are working at a level of attainment below that measured by the National Curriculum, the school is working with staff from other special schools to ensure that their assessments are accurate. Teachers are also reviewing their assessment practices as a result of the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. However, the range of subjects and opportunities to gain GCSE and Entry-Level qualifications are not as extensive as they could be, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Recent elections for the head boy and head girl helped the pupils to understand the idea of voting for someone who wants to make a difference to the school. School council members were involved in the interviews for the headteacher. Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are covered in every lesson and in a very well-planned programme of assemblies. All pupils are valued as individuals and there is a strong feeling of mutual respect across the school. Every pupil is given an equal opportunity to succeed and there is no discrimination.
- The management of teachers' performance is very closely linked to the national *Teachers' Standards* and pupils' progress. Targeted training opportunities enable all staff to develop their skills further. The school is also using the skills and expertise of members of their support staff, many of whom are encouraged to lead some parts of lessons; for example, in music and cookery. The school is providing opportunities for teaching assistants to train as teachers.
- Pupils' safety and welfare have paramount priority and leaders make sure that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met. High-quality risk assessments help to keep pupils safe, and all staff and pupils know what to do if they have any concerns at all about their well-being.
- Students in the sixth form follow a range of subjects which build on their previous learning well. This includes relevant careers education to enable them to make informed choices about their future. The sixth form staff always accompany and support students when they attend the link course at the Peterborough City College. They keep detailed records relating to their attendance, behaviour and progress. The link course supports students' preparation for the next stage in their education and helps to promote their independence and confidence.
- The pupil premium funding and Year 7 'catch-up' funding are used effectively to provide additional speech and language support. This has led to improved communication for pupils. Pupil premium funding has also

been used to provide additional individual support for literacy and numeracy, and has had a good impact on eligible pupils, some of who are now making better progress than their classmates.

- Leaders have made good use of the primary school physical education and sport premium to employ a specialist physical education team who work alongside the subject lead teacher who has introduced a range of exciting activities such as competitive conkers, hula hooping, wheelchair sports and ice hockey. This has led to increased enjoyment and participation in competitive sports and in lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- The local authority supported the school very well during the many changes of headship. It is now very confident that the headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be developed further. It continues to provide good challenge to the school and is supporting the governors in the performance management of the headteacher.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school extremely well and have provided stability for the staff during the many changes of headship since the previous inspection. They have recently changed the structure of the governing body so that there is an increased emphasis on quality and pupil outcomes and they are now more actively involved in monitoring and challenging the work of the school through both their formal and informal visits.
- Governors are very well informed about the progress that individual pupils make and the quality of teaching. This is as a result of the rigorous monitoring cycle that has been established. They oversee the headteacher's performance well and know about other staff's performance and how the appraisal system supports this. They ensure the school rewards strong teaching and understand the systems for tackling any underperformance.
- Governors make sure that the school applies all the required safeguarding measures and health and safety procedures rigorously. They are meticulous about checking risk assessments to ensure the safety of pupils, both on and off site.
- Governors are also very involved in how the school promotes tolerance and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and this is reflected in their above-average attendance and their eagerness to take part in lessons and activities. The same positive attitudes were seen in the Olympic College, where students show great respect for each other.
- Behaviour is always managed well by staff as the pupils respond very positively to the consistent application of rewards and sanctions. All pupils are aware of the 'Golden Rules', which include following instructions and being nice to each other. In the lower part of the school, the pupils work extremely hard to make sure they are awarded a 'sun' and not a 'cloud or a storm'. Higher up the school, pupils and students in the sixth form gain team points for completing a piece of work to the best of their ability or playing well with each other.
- The friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the school and the respect that the pupils have for each other means they are not afraid to express their views. They are courteous and polite to adults. They feel listened to and make a very good contribution to school life, as well as helping others through various fundraising events.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils' safety and well-being are a constant priority and all safeguarding requirements are fully met. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed so that pupils are safe, both in school and on off-site visits.

- Pupils feel very safe at the school and told inspectors that, 'Everyone cares for each other and it is like a family.'
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different forms of bullying and said that, while occasionally some bullying does take place, staff deal with any issues straight away. Pupils always knew who they could go to for help if they had any concerns.
- The pupils told inspectors that one of the school governors came in to school to talk to them about how to keep themselves safe when using computers. They also explained how they were taught to use equipment safely when they were cooking and doing science experiments and why it was important to wear safety goggles.
- Students in the sixth form have a keen awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe, such as selecting the safest route when planning a trip into town. They know they must wait and look for traffic when crossing the road when they are out in the wider world.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. Evidence from the schools' own monitoring of teaching over the last year shows that the quality of teaching across the school and in the sixth form is steadily improving.
- Good use of signing, communication symbols and practical resources were seen in all lessons and also in evidence gathered to show pupils' progress over time. Pupils with more complex needs use technological communication aids to make known their responses. Teachers and teaching assistants use sign language to enable those with poorly developed communication skills to be understood effectively. In all classrooms, visual timetables are displayed and pupils with autism and communication difficulties benefit from the use of pictures and symbols.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and have very positive relationships with pupils. They know the pupils well and have high expectations of them. They have a thorough knowledge of each pupil's learning needs and what their achievements are to date. The way in which teachers and assistants work together as a team to support pupils' learning is a key strength across the school.
- Teachers make good use of pupils' individual targets when planning lessons, and they nearly always provide the right level of challenge. Teachers provide pupils with good written and verbal feedback which allows them to understand how to improve their work. A scrutiny of pupils' books and work on display around the school showed that progress for all groups of pupils was at least good. For some, it was outstanding.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) across the school is a particular strength because teachers' skills in this area are very effective. As a result, pupils' reading skills have rapidly improved. This in turn allows them to build their skills in other subjects.
- Numeracy is taught in a very practical way to give numbers meaning for the pupils. Adults help the pupils to understand why the activity is relevant and useful in very practical ways. There are frequent trips to the local shops to improve pupils' understanding of the value of money. In cooking, pupils learn to weigh out ingredients accurately. In a sixth form class, students were using tape measures to estimate and measure parts of the body and they took great pride in their work.
- The school provides a very stimulating, well-resourced centre for learning. Displays are of very high quality and are used during lessons to reinforce key skills and concepts.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the school with skills and understanding well below those expected for their age. Many of the

pupils join with no English and very low language and communication skills. As a result of good teaching and well-planned activities, pupils make good and, for some, outstanding progress in developing literacy and communication skills.

- Pupils throughout the school continue to make good progress, particularly in English and mathematics. This was seen in their books, in the school's data and in the school's records of observations showing the impact of teaching over time on pupils' learning. It was also observed during inspectors' visits to classrooms with senior leaders. All pupils make outstanding progress in their personal, social and health education, which rapidly increases their confidence and self-esteem as learners.
- Although good practice is evident in literacy, a very small minority of pupils do not make the progress they should in some other subjects. Not all subject leaders have effective monitoring procedures that show them where pupils could do better.
- The improved system for tracking pupils' achievement has shown that all groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, those with severe learning difficulties, those with autism and complex medical conditions, and those who are eligible for pupil premium, all make progress in English and mathematics that is good or better. This is because effective individual support to promote their learning has been well planned with therapists and other professionals.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form gain qualifications in a range of basic and life skills reaching entry level 1, 2 and 3 in a range of ASDAN and OCR awards.
- The relatively more able and those with moderate learning difficulties also make good progress and are given lots of opportunities to develop their social and communication skills. However, the school does not provide a wide enough range of externally accredited courses to enable these pupils to show outstanding progress from their individual starting points.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The quality of education in the sixth form is good. Students achieve well and they all plan to go on to further education when they leave school. This is because they have excellent opportunities to develop work-related skills. In addition, they take part in enterprise projects that prepare them well for life after school.
- The quality of teaching is good. A particular strength in teaching is the way in which teachers integrate tasks that develop students' literacy and numeracy skills. An excellent example of this is the sixth form café that is run by students every week for parents, visitors, staff and students.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and the range of qualifications on offer is improving. Students have the opportunity to follow vocational courses at the Peterborough City College. They enjoy these enormously because they make them 'feel more grown up'.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the students are outstanding. They are exceptionally motivated, happy and confident. They gain great enjoyment from the activities provided and they apply themselves extremely well. They say they particularly enjoy going to college on public transport because it helps them to be more independent.

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	110948
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	447749

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	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madeleine Albert
Headteacher	Adam Brewster
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 March 2011
Telephone number	01733 262878
Fax number	01733 262878
Email address	a.brewster@heltwate.co.uk

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