

Strathmore School

Meadlands Drive, Petersham, Richmond, TW10 7ED

Inspection dates

5–6 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.

- Senior leaders have developed very clear aims for the school and have very high expectations of both staff and pupils.
- The governing body is especially effective. Very well informed governors challenge school leaders and hold them to account.
- The governing body and leaders have maintained good quality teaching and high standards since the last inspection despite the increased school roll and a high turnover of staff. The school is very well placed to build further on this success.
- Teaching is good across the school and so pupils learn well in lessons.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and so their achievement is typically higher than that of similar pupils nationally.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well. The achievement of pupils who are eligible for additional funding is the same as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, and pupils have an excellent attitude to school and to their learning. Their attendance is high.
- Excellent safeguarding procedures ensure pupils' safety when in school and in the community. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils are well prepared for leaving school. Many make very good progress in developing self-help and other personal skills, such as using public transport independently. This enables them to use community facilities and to seek employment.
- The school has very good provision for preparing pupils to live in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different communities and the differences between people, as well as the need to respect the rights and feelings of others.
- Pupils are very well cared for and looked after. There are excellent relationships throughout the school and pupils are treated with dignity.
- A range of therapists make a very significant contribution to pupils' physical well-being and personal development. This supports pupils' learning in lessons.
- The provision for post-16 students is good. They are well prepared for moving into adulthood.
- Effective links with partners provide good additional learning opportunities for pupils.
- Very good links with parents and carers ensure that families are supported and involved in their children's education.
- The staff show unanimous support for the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet of the highest quality to result in pupils making excellent progress.
- Middle managers do not do enough to support leaders' drive for excellence. Not enough of them fulfil their additional responsibilities effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all year groups and were accompanied by either the headteacher or a deputy headteacher in every observation that took place. Nine different members of staff were observed.
- Meetings were held with all members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and an officer from the local authority. Discussions also took place with a senior speech and language therapist and the middle manager with responsibility for the post-16 department.
- The online questionnaire, Parent View, could not be used to collect the opinions of parents and carers because too few completed it for the results to be displayed. Therefore, their views were gathered from the one parent who contacted the inspection team directly and from the findings of the school's own questionnaire that was circulated in June 2014.
- The views of pupils were collected from a meeting held with a small group and from brief conversations with some of them during the inspection.
- The inspection team scrutinised the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documentation was examined. This included information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding procedures, the school's own judgements about its strengths and areas for improvement, and development planning.

Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Strathmore is a small special school for pupils with complex and severe learning difficulties. Around half of the pupils also have autism.
- Pupils attend the school from four local authorities in addition to Richmond.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and around two-thirds of them are boys.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for about a quarter of its pupils, which is broadly in line with the national average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- The school also receives additional funding for primary school physical education and sport.
- Pupils have a range of ethnic backgrounds, with White British being the predominant group. About one in three pupils are at an early stage of learning English, although all pupils have communication difficulties.
- The number of pupils has increased by more than half since the last inspection. This resulted in additional classes being established and new staff being appointed. The majority of teachers have been appointed since the last inspection.
- There have also been changes in the leadership team. The deputy headteacher who was in post at the time of the last inspection has since left, and the two assistant headteachers at that time have been promoted to deputy headteachers.
- An almost entirely new governing body was appointed following the last inspection. The Chair is a National College Leader in School Governance.
- The school has established partnerships with Richmond-upon-Thames College, Grey Court School and the neighbouring Russell School.
- The school performs a community role in providing support, guidance and training to staff in local schools about working with pupils with learning difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is typically outstanding by ensuring that staff routinely:
 - provide pupils with suitably challenging work that stretches them at all times
 - make better use of their knowledge of pupils' prior learning and understanding when planning learning
 - meet all pupils' preferred communication styles by using a range of approaches at all times
 - model sounds consistently when teaching phonics in order to help pupils to develop their reading and writing.
- Improve leadership and management further by:
 - ensuring all middle managers are equally effective in carrying out their curriculum leadership responsibilities and supporting staff who are new to special education
 - developing teachers' so that they effectively work with class teams and routinely brief all adults about their precise roles in supporting the learning of the pupils with whom they work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team has established a set of clear aims for the school, and the very effective governing body has supported it in achieving them. Leaders very efficiently managed the demands placed upon them to increase the school's roll and accommodation with very limited space.
- Senior leaders dealt with a significant turnover of staff very well. Some were additional staff because of the growing pupil roll, whilst others replaced staff that left. The majority were newly qualified teachers or staff new to special education. Led by a very effective headteacher, senior leaders have done a good job in supporting them, so that teaching has remained good and is improving. Teachers' performance management is used well to support the improvement of teaching.
- Middle managers are not as effective as senior leaders and governors. Not all middle managers support senior leaders as well as they should by showing leadership in their curriculum responsibilities. Furthermore, they do not support leaders enough in helping to equip new staff with the skills required to work with pupils with complex difficulties.
- The school is generally calm. Pupils follow instructions and develop positive relationships with each other and with adults. The school ensures equal opportunity, and pupils learn about respecting others, celebrating differences and community responsibilities. This contributes significantly to preparing them for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors are confident that pupils are safe in school. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. No parents or carers contacted the inspection team to express concerns about safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders respond effectively to all incidents of inappropriate behaviour, and have good understanding of individual pupils' behaviour. A recently installed electronic system is now enabling them to identify more efficiently trends and patterns of behaviour in the school as a whole.
- Leaders have a very good grasp of pupils' achievement and of how their performance compares with similar pupils nationally. Careful examination of pupils' progress enables them to measure the extent to which pupils are on track to achieve challenging end of key stage targets.
- Pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities. A strong focus on communication, including literacy, and numeracy is supported by a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme. Good use is made of local facilities to support school-based learning.
- The school has made a good start in responding to the requirements of the new National Curriculum, as well as with procedures for checking how well pupils are doing.
- There are well-established procedures for checking and reporting on how well the school is doing. The school development plan identifies the most important areas to further raise standards.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has a positive impact on their learning. Improving pupils' social skills is one focus of spending this year, and this is leading to an improved ability to relate to others and to learn more effectively.
- Additional physical education funding is used well. A recently appointed lead teacher for physical education has developed more opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting events. Pupil's self-image and willingness to work with others have improved as a result.
- The staff are unanimous in their support of what the school is trying to achieve.
- The local authority maintains routine oversight of the school. It provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- There are very good links with parents and carers. A family support worker works closely with individual families, as well as arranging opportunities for families to meet together. Parents and carers receive regular reports about their children's progress, as well as regular newsletters.
- A partnership with a local school gives a small group of younger pupils the regular social experience of playing alongside mainstream pupils. The link with a local college makes a good contribution to preparing post-16 students for leaving school, by giving them experience of further education. On-going careers guidance also helps them make appropriate choices for their next steps beyond school.
- The school makes a significant contribution to the wider community. The headteacher recently took on an interim headship to assist a school in a transition period. The staff work with other local school to provide training in areas such as moving and handling children, signing and safe restraint techniques.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is extremely effective. Led by a very astute Chair, it maintains very close oversight of the school. Governors routinely challenge and seek clarification about the reports they receive.
 - The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met and that all safeguarding measures

- are in place and working efficiently.
- Staff know governors as they visit the school frequently. Each governor has responsibility for a particular subject and so there is understanding of how the school measures pupils' progress and achievement.
 - Leaders and the governing body have a shared understanding of how well the school is performing. Governors check that pupils receive a good range of learning opportunities, and they examine leaders' evaluations of the school's performance and how priority development areas are to be addressed.
 - The governing body knows about how additional funding impacts on pupils' achievement and personal development.
 - Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and the local authority officer about the quality of teaching. They have a very good understanding of teachers' performance management, how it links to pay and responsibility and how underperformance is being addressed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They behave extremely well in classrooms and in different parts of the school. They respect the school environment and handle resources, such as musical instruments, carefully.
- Pupils who have particularly challenging behaviour are very well supported and so learning continues with minimal disruption.
- Pupils make very good progress in learning to respond positively to instructions, follow routines and become accepting of change. They are generally motivated to do their best.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are constructive, respectful and courteous. Pupils have the confidence to ask for support should a concern arise.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and show a willingness to take part in different activities, such as participating in songs during the lunchtime choir meeting.
- No bullying or racist incidents have occurred and fixed-term exclusions are very rare. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and so they attend regularly.
- Pupils are tolerant of others. Pupils who come from different cultural backgrounds mix very well and work together in harmony.
- Pupils make very good progress in all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This prepares them well for living in modern Britain.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Highly effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. The staff are well trained in aspects such as child protection, physical restraint, first aid and safer recruitment, and they apply policies and procedures rigorously. The single central record meets requirements.
- Risk assessments are in place for individuals and for events such as trips off site. These ensure pupils' safety when pupils are in school or in the community.
- The staff confirm unanimously that pupils are safe and very well looked after. They indicate that any behaviour that might be interpreted as bullying or any other type of intimidation is dealt with immediately and effectively. Neither pupils nor their families raised any concerns about bullying or any other form of unpleasant behaviour taking place.
- Pupils make very good progress in understanding how to stay healthy and safe. Close liaison between the school, pupils and their families ensures that pupils get consistent messages about potential dangers to their well-being, including the importance of safe internet use and the risks associated with social media.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good. Some teaching is outstanding reflecting its improving quality. Consequently, pupils learn quickly in lessons and make good progress. Adults make very good use of praise and encouragement to support pupils' learning.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour efficiently. They know the pupils well and so all members of class teams have a consistent approach to dealing with individuals' behaviour. Teaching contributes to support pupils' personal development by preparing them to cope with change. Pupils are encouraged to make informed

choices and enabled to become increasingly aware that their actions have consequences.

- Teaching makes a good contribution to developing pupils' communication skills. The most effective teaching uses a range of approaches to meet each pupil's preferred method of communication. These include text, symbols, signing and the use of electronic aids. However, this is not routine and so, on occasion, learning does not proceed as quickly as it could.
- Teaching also generally promotes pupils' literacy skills effectively. Pupils are encouraged to practise their speaking and listening skills, and reading and writing are encouraged regularly. This includes supporting pupils who are at the early stages of recognising letters and making their sounds (phonics), but not all adults are sufficiently skilled in modelling the sounds that they want pupils to copy.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics lessons because teaching develops pupils' mathematical language and vocabulary, such as bigger/smaller and long/medium/short, as well as their understanding of number and shape.
- Teachers' leadership of class teams is variable in quality, and this has an impact on pupils' learning. In some instances, teaching assistants have not been sufficiently well briefed in advance about their precise roles in supporting individuals' learning. Time is lost when teachers have to do this during the lesson.
- Members of the most effective class teams check pupils' understanding regularly when working with individuals or pairs. Teachers set initial activities at just the right level, and adults record small steps in achievement. Furthermore, they generally seek opportunities to see if pupils can apply their new skills or knowledge in different, slightly more challenging, activities.
- Teaching is not outstanding because not all teachers consistently plan learning activities using their knowledge of what each pupil has already learned. At times there is too much repetition of the same activity as pupils have work that is too easy for them. Other pupils may have work that is too hard and support is not on hand to guide them.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' high attendance, positive approach and excellent behaviour contribute greatly to the good progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' achievement is good and improving because more pupils look set to exceed national expectations as the overall quality of teaching improves. Even though some pupils are making excellent progress, achievement is not yet outstanding overall because expectations are not consistently high enough. On these occasions, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The progress that pupils make from their starting points in English indicates good achievement compared with similar pupils elsewhere of the same age and attainment. They make good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- Pupils perform equally well in mathematics and most make more progress than is expected of them.
- Pupils' achievement overall is such that pupils are beginning to close the gap between their attainment and that of pupils nationally. As a result, for the first time, the school has Key Stage 4 pupils who will be taking accredited examinations at the end of Year 11.
- All groups of pupils do equally well. Boys and girls make similar progress, as do pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who are at an early stage of learning English.
- There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of pupils who receive additional funding and others. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Therapists for speech and language, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, music and play contribute significantly to pupils' achievement. By working with staff in classrooms, they check the effectiveness of their work in supporting pupils' learning.
- The good achievement of pupils prepares them well for moving into continuing education or training when they leave school.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Good leadership and management have overseen the introduction and development of a range of learning opportunities that is well suited to the students' age and abilities. They are effectively designed to address students' particular learning and personal needs. Activities are planned around three key areas: skills for life and work; vocational education and training; and community access and involvement.
- Students are given good opportunities to learn about the world of work. They visit different workplaces,

learn about presentation and interview techniques, enjoy work experience and run an in-school café as an enterprise project.

- Students' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. The students feel safe and make very good progress in developing living skills, such as in personal care and shopping that will help them to live as independently as possible in adulthood. They get the chance to put some of these into practice on annual residential visits to centres that enable them to participate in different outdoor pursuits.
- Students' successes in a small range of accredited courses that students follow further contribute to their good preparation for leaving school.
- Despite the very good progress that students make in their personal development, their achievement is not outstanding. This is because teaching is typically good, rather than outstanding. Time is not always used efficiently and so teaching does not challenge students consistently. Therefore, students make good, rather than outstanding, progress in their learning and achieve well.
- Relationships are strong and interactions between staff and students are very positive. Teaching provides good opportunities for students to develop their communication skills, both in lessons and when using facilities in the local community.

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

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| Unique reference number | 102954 |
| Local authority | Richmond upon Thames |
| Inspection number | 448049 |

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

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|---|---------------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 7–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 58 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 15 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Harry James |
| Headteacher | Ivan Pryce |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8–9 February 2012 |
| Telephone number | 020 8948 0047 |
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