

# David Lewis School

Mill Lane, Warford, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, SK9 7UD

**Inspection dates** 9–10 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
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 and governors have established an exceptionally clear, shared and strategic vision for developing and improving the school. There have been measurable improvements since the last inspection. As a result, there is high staff morale and outstanding capacity for further improvement because staff want to 'get it right for every learner'.
- Teachers, support, residential staff and other professionals work extremely well together in meeting the complex health, communication, social and learning needs of students. Most students make good or better progress from their starting points, particularly in their communication and independence skills.
- The sixth form is good, due to the strong leadership provided by senior managers. All students gain external accreditation with regard to their personal development and many move on to achieve a place at college.
- Students have equal access to, and enjoy, a wide range of educational experiences that contribute significantly to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary because all staff are sensitive to their needs and provide outstanding care and support for them to thrive in school. Staff supervise students exceptionally well so that they are safe at all times.
- Senior staff, with the support of other professionals, monitor the quality of teaching and support well, so that these are never less than good.
- Governors are very well informed about the work of the school, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They hold leaders firmly to account and are involved fully in school improvement plans.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always ensure that their observations of students' learning in each lesson are evaluated precisely and recorded to inform next steps with close reference to students' agreed learning targets.
- Students' work is not always checked and annotated to indicate the small steps of progress they make towards achieving their agreed targets.
- School leaders have not ensured that the school website provides all the information for parents it should.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered and reviewed a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching over time. This included one observation of teaching conducted jointly with the deputy headteacher (assistant vice-principal). The inspector also conducted two learning walks to gather information about students' learning, behaviour, well-being and progress.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher (Director of Education), the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the occupational therapist, speech therapist, clinical educational psychologist, residential staff and a lead social worker.
- The inspector spoke informally with three students and observed other students develop their early reading skills.
- The inspector observed students' behaviour in lessons and when moving around the campus.
- The inspector reviewed the school's documentation, including its improvement plan, self-review document, information about students' achievement and progress, safeguarding and other school policies, headteacher reports and governors' minutes from their meetings. The inspector also reviewed the school's website.
- The inspector met with two parents and spoke with another over the telephone. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector received four returns from the inspection questionnaire for staff about the school.

## Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a non-maintained special school and is part of the David Lewis organisation.
- The school provision caters currently for 8 students aged between 16 and 19 years. Most of the students live on site.
- All students have neurological conditions with associated epilepsy. Their learning needs are complex and include profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. They all have statements of special educational needs.
- Most students are boys and are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. The school has received funding for only one student from the relevant local authority.
- Students are admitted from a wide geographical area that includes 28 local authorities in England and Wales. The main local authority involved with the school is Cheshire East.
- The school has received accreditation from the Autistic Society for the quality of its provision.
- There is an informal partnership between David Lewis and Piper Hill Special School in Manchester. Piper Hill is an outstanding school.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- There have been a number of changes made to the management structure of the school, so that it is now aligned to the David Lewis College in terms of governance and funding arrangements.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - teachers refer to students' precise targets when evaluating and recording learning that has taken place during lessons
  - teachers record their comments about students' work over time so that a clearer picture can be gained about the small steps of progress being made.
- Improve the school's website by ensuring that:
  - there is more information about school contacts, policies, governance and school improvement
  - there is easy access to information about the school for all stakeholders or potential stakeholders.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have been assiduous in overseeing further improvements since the last inspection. Each student now has clear learning plans which are monitored regularly and discussed by staff. School improvement plans are now monitored very carefully and shared with staff, governors and other stakeholders so that there is an extremely optimistic feel among school staff and other professionals. There is a clear and highly strategic action plan in place which is also monitored and checked by the David Lewis trustees, who visit four times a year and provide additional challenge to senior leaders.
- There are robust systems and policies in place before, during and after admitting new students to the school. The very strong partnership between school staff and other professional staff has led to the careful deployment of staff, resources and learning environments to best meet the needs of students who have very complex learning, communication and medical needs.
- Due to the small staff team there are no designated middle leaders. Instead, class teachers share these roles. They regularly discuss the achievements and progress of the students with support staff and relevant professionals, maintaining good visual records with accompanying explanatory comments. As a result, a large majority of students make good or better progress from their starting points, particularly in developing their independence skills.
- Many students advance to college because of the support they receive in developing their independence skills, especially in communication and behaviour. The school's curriculum provides a wealth of experiences for students in terms of developing their independence in preparation for life in modern Britain, many of these being on site. For example, they follow an animal care course or benefit from a work experience placement in the campus shop or college 'juice bar'. The school's provision offers high levels of inclusion and equal opportunities for its students, so that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school receives only limited pupil premium funding from local authorities, but leaders ensure that additional occupational therapy support and related equipment are 'bought in' to address successfully the physical needs of disadvantaged students and to ensure equality of opportunity and equal access to learning.
- Senior leaders promote highly effective partnership-working with other professionals, and so multi-disciplinary meetings also lead to the consistent implementation of student behaviour plans for students with particularly challenging behaviour. This, alongside extensive training for staff from the different professionals, leads to notably skilful management of students' behaviour and subsequent calm classrooms and other learning contexts. Parents say how impressed they are with their children's social and behavioural development and appreciate the regular weekly home-school diaries.
- Leaders and other professionals work collaboratively to check that safeguarding policies and practices are followed meticulously, overseen by a campus-based team of social workers. Record-keeping with regard to attendance and behaviour is of a high order and any concerns are followed up quickly and successfully to ensure that improvements are made where required. Safer recruitment of staff procedures meet requirements.
- The school's website does not provide enough information about the school's work, governance, policies and procedures or about school improvement-planning and progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide very effective support for the school. They are knowledgeable and well informed about the school's work through their full meetings and committees and through visits to the school. They check parental views and opinions at organised parent forum meetings or when sitting in on lessons.
  - Governors have undergone training in areas such as safeguarding and have recently completed a skills audit, having taken on new members.
  - Governors are well informed and knowledgeable about students' achievements and destinations when they leave school or college because of high quality reports from the headteacher.
  - Governors are fully involved in staffing matters, overseeing effective appraisal procedures for all staff, including support staff, thus supporting additional training, external accreditation for staff or making tough decisions about capability.
  - Finances are strongly placed so that any variations in student numbers are managed effectively alongside strategic plans to increase numbers in the near future. Governors know the impact of decisions they have made on the use of any occasional pupil premium funding the school receives.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Exceptionally skilled teachers, support staff and other relevant professionals provide outstanding care and support at all times during the school day. As a result, students who experience complex communication difficulties, alongside extreme medical and behavioural challenges, are able to thrive and develop in an exemplary manner.
- The highly effective partnership between residential staff and school-based staff ensures that students attend school as often as they can, despite having to manage regular medical or health issues. As a result, a number of students have full or close to full attendance.
- Students are extremely well supervised, but not to the extent that they cannot develop independence, for example, when visiting a local supermarket or working in the 'juice bar' in the college. They respond exceptionally well to these opportunities.
- Regular checking and monitoring of students' behaviour plans enable students to extend and develop responsible behaviour and socialisation beyond the school. For example, they visit The Wingate Centre which is set up to provide a range of physical and other activities for children and young people who experience a range of learning needs.
- Students communicate through sign systems or with the help of support staff, that they enjoy activities like basketball, swimming or playing the guitar. The most able are able to verbalise that they enjoy coming to school. These activities offer excellent opportunities for students to develop their sense of enjoyment or to get rid of pent-up energy.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements and levels of supervision are managed very well and checked and recorded meticulously.
- Clear policies and procedures, alongside student behaviour plans, ensure consistent and calm management of behaviour. Staff are particularly skilled at anticipating student behaviour that might compromise the safety of others. As a result, additional learning environments are available to distract students who may become agitated.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors praised the staff's ability to adapt staffing and resources to ensure that students remain safe at all times.
- Behaviour records are exceptionally well maintained and overseen by the clinical psychologist who takes a lead role in observing behaviour in lessons or in refining behaviour plans with safety in mind.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection because of the introduction of individual plans for students that sit alongside teachers' lesson plans. As a result, teachers and support staff work collaboratively when matching particular activities to the learning, behavioural and communication needs of individual students. This has led to never less than good quality teaching over the past year since the last inspection.
- There is good reference made to pictorial digital evidence that shows students' development over time and which is annotated to indicate learning and achievement. Students are then able to make requests or indicate their understanding about what is going to happen, for example, when going through their visual timetable for the day. This information is used to update school records on students' achievements regularly and to inform future topics and activities.
- Teachers and support staff make strong use of the picture exchange system, simple reading books and technological aids when encouraging students to develop their early reading, writing and number skills. As a result, all students make small steps of progress over time in these subjects.
- Teachers and teacher assistants evaluate students' learning regularly. Staff refer to agreed written learning targets on a lesson-by-lesson basis and discuss outcomes to inform next steps. At the moment, there is no specific reference made to what these targets represent in terms of precise ability levels. As a result, evaluations of learning and related work are mostly descriptive and therefore do not add fully to the identification of the small steps of progress that might occur over time.
- Some students persevere well with an activity when they know they are working for a tangible reward. For example, they make good progress when counting numbers on a tablet computer. Good use of available teaching areas means that teachers can introduce a topic for a short period with the whole group and

encourage social engagement, but then deploy teaching assistants for more intensive one-to-one work. For instance, the most-able students in a basketball lesson were able to practise and develop their shooting and passing skills, while anxious students or those most in need of help were gently coaxed towards engaging in a balancing activity through staff modelling or through the picture exchange system. These activities promote excellent spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and equality of opportunity.

- The work of the occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and clinical psychologist adds real quality to the provision for students because they offer suggestions about resources or approaches as well as staff training. This approach covers all aspects of student development which then leads to positive engagement and progress in learning.
- Because of the high level of staffing and range of learning experiences provided, students benefit greatly from activities that enable their equal access to the school's rich curriculum. Skilled and knowledgeable staff selected and handled a variety of small animals – a snake and a chicken, for example. This soon engaged students in using their senses to explore each creature's characteristics. This helped to challenge students to make a decision as to whether an animal belonged in the home as a pet or on a farm.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good or better progress from very low starting points. This is often from what the school terms, 'catastrophic' circumstances. Some students may have not been in education for some time because the wide range of provision they needed had not been available nearer home.
- The high quality of combined teaching, support and advice from other professionals ensures that students make outstanding progress in getting used to their individual timetables and daily routines – most relying upon the picture exchange system alongside a signing system. With growing confidence, students become increasingly calm and engage in learning.
- The most-able students can ask for help and advice, for example, when preparing to do some hand painting and printing. Others will use a computer programme to develop their knowledge and understanding of initial letters and the sounds that they make. They will then write down the letters with increasing dexterity.
- Students enjoy working on activities with a few other students when given the opportunity, for example, when participating in a physical education lesson. During the inspection, the most able not only practised and developed their passing skills, but demonstrated throwing and catching skills with a smaller ball to their less-able peers. This is a further example of students' high quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and how well the school promotes equality of opportunity.
- Students develop their counting skills when accessing a computer programme. They start to match what they hear or see to the relevant number. These skills are then developed when shopping with staff at the local supermarket. They develop a sense of cause and effect when money is exchanged for food items which are then used to create a meal back in school.
- Students make good use of the picture exchange system to indicate their understanding of sequences when preparing and cooking a meal with graded support according to engagement or ability. On occasion, such work is not then marked or annotated by the teacher to indicate what the student had achieved and what they might need to work on further. As a result, the small steps of progress that might be made are not always picked up.
- Most students in the school make good or better progress in the areas of English, number, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social, health and citizenship education.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good because of the strong leadership and direction of senior staff. This has ensured that teachers and support staff are clear about, and make good use of, the systems in place for assessing students' abilities and planning to meet their needs. The quality of teaching and achievement of students are good, while behaviour and safety are both outstanding.
- Teachers, support staff and a range of therapists and other professionals combine exceptionally well to ensure that students are emotionally secure, safe and extremely well cared for. As a result, students thrive in an environment that takes full account of their complex learning, communication, behavioural and medical needs. Their behaviour is outstanding because they respond very well to the sensitive support and

guidance from very skilled staff. As a result, students develop excellent independence skills when making choices about their behaviour.

- Students have access to a wide range of educational opportunities both on site and beyond, for example, when they visit The Wingate Centre to engage in group multi-sport activities. They all achieve City and Guilds external accreditation in personal development and most advance to the David Lewis College at the end of their time in the sixth form. The older students benefit, too, from work experience placements in the local shop. Most go on to college when they leave school.
- Teaching over time is consistently good or better, leading to at least good outcomes for students in English and personal, social, health and citizenship education in particular.
- There is currently insufficient reference made to students' precise learning targets and work folders when planning daily activities and when staff evaluate students' learning and progress.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111499
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	447952

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	16–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	8
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	8
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Diana Colquhoun
<b>Headteacher</b>	William McInally
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2012
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