

# Holbrook School for Autism

Portway, Belper, DE56 0TE

**Inspection dates** 16–17 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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.

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have improved the quality of teaching and ensured the school is improving rapidly. They have developed robust monitoring systems, which help to ensure that achievement is good for the pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and they make good progress in all their subjects. Pupils feel safe and state that the staff look after them well. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite towards each other and adults.
- Teaching is good and teachers provide interesting and engaging lessons based very much on the pupils' daily lives. This helps to motivate pupils who try their best.
- Pupils in the second primary unit make good progress because teaching is good and lessons are well planned to match the needs of the pupils.
- The staff develop the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all the lessons they teach. They show pupils what good social skills look like and so develop the pupils' personal skills effectively.
- The school provides a range of visits which helps to enhance pupils' learning and provides them with a good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Leadership is good and so the effectiveness of governors has improved rapidly since the last inspection. They use a range of information to make sure they know the school well.
- The sixth form is good due to good and at times outstanding teaching. Students in the sixth-form unit are well motivated and make rapid progress in all areas of their learning. They are well supported for their next steps in education and their future lives.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally pupils' learning slows in the main school and the sixth form because teaching is not outstanding and so they do not have the resources they need to meet the lesson's aims.
- Progress in the pupils' language and communication skills occasionally slows due to the lack of appropriate personal communication aids.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a number of lessons and were accompanied by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher during a number of these observations.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading during their lessons and observed lessons on language and communication skills development.
- Discussions were held with a representative of the local authority, a parent governor and the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and several senior and middle leaders.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation covering safeguarding, examples of governors' meetings, information relating to the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils across the school. Inspectors looked at documentation regarding the behaviour of the pupils and their attendance.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the pupils' work in their books, files and around the school.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, for the inspectors to access this information. They did, however, take account of a recent school parent survey and the 26 responses to the staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Deakin

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Holbrook School is a school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and learning difficulties. It has a second primary unit on the main site which caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders with average learning abilities. The sixth form is partly on the main site and on a site approximately two and a half miles from the main school.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for autistic spectrum disorders and severe learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is approximately a third of the school population, which is average compared with national figures. This extra government funding supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and/or looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. However, the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- No pupils access alternative provision.
- There is residential provision for pupils for up to four nights per week, but this provision did not form part of this inspection.
- The school provides outreach work to local authority mainstream schools that have pupils with autism.

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

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching further in the main school and sixth form by ensuring that all staff provide pupils with the tools they need to learn through consistently resourcing lessons effectively.
- Raise achievement further by ensuring that language and communication aids are appropriate for each pupil.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have restructured the leadership team and this has created effective leadership and management across the whole school. The leadership team is well supported by the governing body. This creates a culture for improvement and staff have high expectations for all pupils. Teaching is improving and as pupils are engaged in their learning behaviour has improved rapidly.
- The senior leadership team has responded robustly to staff underperformance and the leadership and management of teaching are effective. Procedures for managing the performance of staff are well linked to improving teaching. Training takes into consideration both the needs of the school and those of the individual staff member.
- Middle leaders monitor teaching effectively and compare what they find in teaching observations with pupil progress information and the scrutiny of pupils' work, including those in the second primary unit.
- The sixth form provision is good due to good leadership which has improved the quality of teaching and raised standards.
- The school's view of its own effectiveness is accurate. The senior leadership team use their good links with the local authority and their local schools to check the accuracy of their judgements. Planning for further improvement is effective, well financed and has realistic time scales for each area of improvement. Its impact is checked robustly by the senior leadership team and the governing body.
- There are very close links with other special schools and specialist agencies such as occupational health therapists, speech and language specialists and a range of medical support. This ensures that all the pupils' needs are successfully met.
- The subjects taught in the school are broad and provide a wide range of learning opportunities for the pupils. These are further supported by visits and visitors to the school. Some of these visits are to local shops and this helps develop the pupils' life skills. Visits to places such as religious and/or cultural centres help the pupils develop an understanding of living in modern Britain.
- The senior leadership team has considered its approach to assessment without National Curriculum levels and has currently decided to maintain its current approach to assessment. However, the senior leadership team are in consultation with its linked special schools regarding the possible development of a unified system.
- Disadvantaged pupils make slightly better progress than their classmates in school due to the well-targeted support they receive. This is because the pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one support in both English and mathematics as well as extra occupational therapy support.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is effectively used to purchase extra sports equipment for both the school and residential provisions. It has also been used to provide a wide range of sporting activities such as archery and go-carting. All this has developed an enthusiasm for physical activity within the pupils as well as a good understanding of how to stay healthy.
- The school effectively uses external careers guidance and support to enable pupils to make choices about their next steps in learning and sets them up well for their future lives.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively through good teaching, rigorous assessment and monitoring which ensures that all pupils achieve their best. Careful monitoring also makes sure that there is no discrimination within the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and keep pupils safe. Some staff questionnaires did raise concerns regarding the taxi arrangements. Inspection evidence did not support these concerns.

However, the senior leadership team has plans to improve the current arrangements in the near future.

- The work of the outreach team is effective and provides good support to local mainstream schools that have pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. This work enables pupils to remain in their schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors ensure they have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses by robustly analysing all aspects of its work, as well as visiting regularly. Governors have undergone further training and restructuring and this has created a body with a wide range of skills, which it uses effectively to challenge and support the senior leadership team. The governors monitor the use of the various funds in the school, the impact of teaching and the results they produce. They are fully involved in the management of teachers' performance and use this information effectively to reward good teaching and to react quickly to any underperformance. Governors know how well the pupils in the school are doing and how their results compare to those of other schools and/or pupils in similar schools nationally. This is because they use data thoughtfully. Governors have improved rapidly since the last inspection and this gives them a strong capacity to bring about further improvement in the school.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the case both in lessons and around the school in general. They are very polite and considerate towards each other. This was clearly demonstrated in the sixth-form unit when a student was a little concerned about strangers being in the unit. A second student calmed him by saying, 'You don't have to be afraid of them because other people are here, everything is alright.'
- Due to the nature of the pupils' disabilities there are occasionally difficulties, but these are handled effectively by the staff. Pupils feel that behaviour is good and there is no bullying in the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and support them effectively, including those in the primary unit in ensuring they know how to behave both in school and other social environments.
- The information the school keeps on pupils' behaviour shows a decrease in behavioural incidents over time. The school has had no exclusions for over a year. Staff know their pupils well and understand how to avoid issues arising. Behaviour in the primary unit is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and in the sixth-form unit are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and as a result attendance is rising rapidly.
- The staff rightly feel behaviour is good and the school's recent parent questionnaire shows that parents are happy with the improvements made in their children's behaviour by the school.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Everyone involved in the school all feels that Holbrook is a safe environment in which to learn. Pupils were happy to tell inspectors how safe they felt due to the caring staff who look after them.
- Excellent routines ensure the pupils' welfare and health are well catered for. At lunch times pupils routinely wash their hands before they eat. Staff teach pupils how to look after themselves and how to stay healthy and safe. Teachers ensure that where appropriate students are fully aware of e-safety. Older pupils are taught how to be safe when in the local and wider communities in which they live.
- Considering the pupils' learning difficulties the school prepares pupils, and especially older pupils, well for their lives in a modern British society.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to support their pupils. Lessons are engaging, very practical and rightly focused on developing the pupils' language and communication skills and core life skills.
- Teachers generally plan their lessons well and ensure that pupils can and do learn effectively. However, very occasionally teachers do not always provide enough resources to enable pupils to learn as rapidly as they might. An example of this was in a lesson designed to develop the pupils' sensory skills. However, there was a limited range of materials available and so this limited the sensory experiences the pupils had.
- Assessment is used effectively by teachers to make sure they know exactly how well pupils are doing. They use their ongoing assessment to change and modify their lessons to ensure pupils make good progress.
- Pupils understand their work because all adults use good questioning and develop their discussion skills. Teachers use a wide range of methods to help pupils learn and to find the best way for them to understand. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and this helps to provide positive learning experiences.
- Teachers use the other adults who support learning effectively and these staff members are well trained and highly appreciated for the work they do. They provide good support to the pupils both in their learning and emotional and personal development.
- Staff make sure that where appropriate pupils clearly know their individual targets and how to achieve them. In all lessons staff make sure that pupils know what they are learning and why.
- The teaching of reading is good and leads to pupils making good progress. This is because teachers encourage pupils to read widely and enjoy books. The teaching of phonics is good and so pupils are able to build words effectively.
- The quality of teaching in literacy and mathematics has had a positive effect on all the pupils' progress rates. Learning has improved and achievement has risen across the school.
- Teachers give the pupils good verbal feedback on how to improve their work. Where appropriate, written feedback is also helpful.
- Teaching in the primary unit is good and leads to positive achievement for all the pupils. This is because teachers engage the pupils in learning. The content of lessons is focused on their individual needs and interests so pupils understand better why they are doing things. Good questioning and discussion skills by all the staff challenge pupils and helps them reach their potential.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and focused on developing the students' key and life skills. Students are well prepared for their future lives through a carefully planned series of activities which involve the students in doing things in their local community. Teaching in the offsite sixth form provision is good with some that is outstanding.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- From very low starting points, pupils across the whole school and in the sixth form, make good progress in their reading, writing, mathematical and language and communication skills.
- The most-able pupils make good progress from their different starting points as staff ensure that all pupils are challenged in their lessons. The most-able pupils in the primary unit make good progress and achieve at higher levels than their classmates in school and in line with similar pupils nationally.

- Older pupils are well equipped for their future lives through a wide range of work experience. Their life skills are developed through community experiences such as enterprise tasks, shopping visits and social occasions. Their language and communication skills are well developed and this helps build confidence and self-esteem. Where appropriate pupils are entered for accreditation in ASDAN and Entry Level key skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are regularly engaged in their learning and this helps them progress at a faster rate. This was seen during a technology lesson with the older students. They had made their own coat hooks and carefully wrote up how they completed this task. Students were happy to discuss their work and how it had helped them develop their skills further.
- Some pupils have very low levels of verbal and/or written communication. In order to help overcome these learning difficulties the school has provided various technological aids. However, at times these aids are not always appropriate and so a few pupils find it difficult to communicate. Pupils do not routinely have personalised communication aids such as pictorial cards, which would provide a wider and more bespoke approach to each pupil's communication needs.
- There are no variations between any of the various groups within the school. Disadvantaged pupils make slightly better progress than their classmates in school in their reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the way in which the pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one support in English and mathematics and extra occupational therapy support. Year 7 pupils are also well supported through extra funding and this makes sure that their good progress is maintained and developed.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress in line with other pupils in school in English and mathematics. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress in line with their peers in school.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form is good and has led to increased progress rates for all students. On both sites teachers link work carefully to developing key skills and ensure these are taught through everyday tasks the students may engage in. For example, students are taken to local shops and other community premises. They also take part in basic work experience and enterprise projects.
- Students are well motivated on both sites but especially at the offsite sixth form unit where teaching is often outstanding. The students achieve well and when appropriate they are entered for qualifications. However, due to the nature of their learning difficulties, the focus of the subjects taught is rightly on developing their key skills and life skills. Much of this work is done through practical, community-based experiences. This in turn develops their social, personal and moral development.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and all staff fully support the learning of the students. Staff build excellent relationships and this means that students trust the staff and so work to the best of their ability. Students support each other and take pride in their various responsibilities. For example, during break time some students surveyed students on the snacks they would like. Others prepared the various snacks and drinks available while others served these and tidied them up afterwards. The whole period was an excellent example of a social occasion reinforcing and developing the students' life skills.
- The sixth form prepares students successfully for their futures. Last year all those who left the school entered further education.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good and students have very positive relationships with the staff. The staff ensure that the students know how to behave in a wide range of environments and settings and so help prepare them well for their future lives. Students feel safe in school. This is because the staff enable students to grow in confidence to cope with strangers and/or handle new experiences suitably.
- The new leadership has created a clear and shared focus for improvement of the off-site unit and so all

staff have high expectations and aspirations for the students.

- The sixth form is not outstanding as the impact of teaching across the two sites is good overall and so achievement is not outstanding.



## 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>	131323
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	451154

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>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<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>	77
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	16
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	Up to 27
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dawn Butler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julian Scholefield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 880208
<b>Fax number</b>	01332 781916
<b>Email address</b>	info@holbrookautism.derbyshire.sch.uk

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