

Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School

Holly Road, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4HH

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School has gone from strength to strength since its previous outstanding inspection. It is an exceptionally successful school.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and relentlessly drives forward school improvement. She and the excellent senior and middle leaders share a vision to continually raise standards. They ensure the best possible provision for the pupils by keeping it under continual review.
- Red Marsh is a very happy school where staff and pupils all feel valued, respected and exceptionally well supported to be able to give of their best. As a result pupils' achievement is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. Despite limited time for joint planning, all staff play their part to match work to the needs of individuals to ensure each pupil learns new skills and gains new knowledge in every lesson.
- The progress which pupils make from their starting points in literacy and numeracy prepares them extremely well to use of these skills in their future lives. Pupils make huge strides in their personal and social development because of the thoughtful support and guidance provided by staff.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years because of very careful assessment and planning. They are provided with lively and stimulating activities which capture their interests and imaginations. Assessments of pupils' work are checked with other special schools but are not yet checked with mainstream partner schools.
- Students in the sixth form or further education (FE) department, make rapid gains in maturity and independence. They enjoy learning about and contributing to life in modern Britain by volunteering in the local community.
- Behaviour throughout school is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school and attendance is high. Staff help pupils learn to manage their own behaviour exceptionally well and ensure it never disrupts the learning of others.
- Safety is paramount at Red Marsh. Pupils learn how to keep themselves as safe as possible. They know a great deal about how to stay safe on the internet.
- Parents feel extremely well informed about what their children are learning and know they can ask staff for support if they need it.
- Governors provide very strong support to the school. They have a secure knowledge of what is happening in the school on a day-to-day basis and are able to question the information provided to them by senior leaders very effectively to contribute to the school's outstanding success.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- They spoke with individual pupils informally around the school and during lessons and met more formally with a group of pupils.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and with other members of staff, with members of the governing body and the school nurse. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed in detail the school's assessment and progress data and its target-setting for pupils. They looked at the school's website and studied documents relating to the curriculum including enrichment activities, school improvement planning, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour management. They reviewed reports from external bodies for the awards achieved by the school.
- The responses from 16 parents to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, were reviewed together with the school's own surveys of stakeholders. Inspectors also considered the views of the 36 members of staff who responded to their questionnaire.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Red Marsh is a school for pupils and sixth form students with severe learning difficulties, many of whom have additional complex learning and medical needs including autism spectrum conditions, profound and multiple learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and only a tiny minority speak English as an additional language. In common with other similar schools, about two-thirds of the pupils are boys.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional government funding through the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Sixth-form students in the FE department attend courses at three colleges on one day a week supported by Red Marsh staff. These include Blackpool and the Fylde, Myerscough and Beaumont Colleges.
- Nursery age children attend early years on a part-time basis.
- The school is a strategic partner with a specialist teaching school.
- The school has partnerships with other special and mainstream schools to provide links in and out of Red Marsh for pupils as appropriate. The school provides outreach guidance and advice to other schools on request.
- The school has obtained and maintained a range of external awards including Investors in People, Leading Parent Partnership, Introductory International School Award and Intermediate School Award from the British Council, Early Years Quality Mark, and Primary Quality Mark. It has completed and is awaiting a further award from the Alliance for Lifelong Learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase joint working to strengthen teaching even further by:
 - exploring ways in which teachers and teaching assistants can be given time to plan together even more effectively
 - checking assessments of pupils' work with other mainstream schools as well as with other special schools
 - further developing the sharing of Red Marsh School's outstanding practice in teaching and managing pupils with special educational needs and disabilities with other schools.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership to a team of highly committed staff who all share her ambition to make sure all pupils achieve the best that they can through high-quality teaching, care and support.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because senior leaders carry out frequent checks on teaching in classrooms, on lesson planning and pupils' work in their books. Staff are provided with an excellent programme of professional development and sharing of best practice within the school. Thorough performance management supports staff to improve their work, as a result of which the quality of teaching is consistently of a very high quality.
- Senior and middle leaders provide the headteacher and their colleagues with highly effective support in their areas of responsibility. All subjects in the excellent curriculum are kept under constant review to ensure they meet the complex needs and interests of pupils and engage them to want to learn. Pupils say how much they enjoy what they learn because the curriculum is rich and exciting and provides lots of opportunities to make visits out of school; they enjoy presentations and events in school which make learning fun.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strongly promoted in the rich curriculum and pupils develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- The senior teacher with responsibility for collecting and analysing assessment and target-setting data has produced impressive information which clearly informs leaders, governors and teachers how well individuals and groups of pupils are progressing. This demonstrates that pupils make at least good and usually outstanding progress in their reading, writing and mathematics and quickly highlights any subject, pupil or group not achieving the progress expected so that action is swiftly taken. Assessments of pupils' work are checked with other special schools and there are plans to develop this further by partnership with other mainstream schools.
- The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination exceptionally well because every individual pupil is valued and respected. The fostering of positive relationships permeates all aspects of the school's provision. Frequent and careful checks on progress and the thoughtful and well-targeted use of the pupil premium funding ensures disadvantaged pupils make at least as good progress as others.
- Primary sports funding has been used to ensure pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to enjoy physical activity and has effectively developed the skills of staff in teaching new sports. Pupils now enter more competitions and in a recent disability swimming gala Red Marsh swept the medal board.
- Partnerships with parents and other professionals are exceptionally strong and ensure pupils' physical and medical well-being and communication are strongly promoted through shared views and joint working, such as the weekly paediatric consultant sessions. The school has developed its website, home-school books, workshops and texting as means to inform parents about what their children are learning and involve them fully in their children's education. Parents know they can ask for and receive help at any time.
- The school works very positively with other special schools. The local authority provides light touch support to senior leaders. Outreach support is provided to mainstream and special schools on request but this is an area of work the school plans to develop further.
- When students in the sixth form attend alternative provision the staff who accompany them keep a close check on their behaviour and progress. Students are given extremely helpful support and careers guidance to ensure they make appropriate choices and successful moves to new placements when they leave school.
- Senior leaders are not content to make their own judgements about the school. They have worked hard to achieve a range of external accreditation to quality assure their work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have continued to grow in skills and knowledge since the previous inspection. They make an excellent contribution to the leadership of the school because their frequent visits and the training they have received enable them to ask challenging questions. Governors know what is working well and the areas that senior leaders are working on to further improve provision and outcomes for pupils.
 - Governors receive and question the comprehensive reports provided by the headteacher and other leaders. They check on the quality of teaching and ensure that performance management is undertaken highly effectively so that pay progression is fair and well-earned. They have a good understanding of the pupil tracking data and the curriculum. Most governors link with a subject or phase lead to have a

sound working knowledge of the school's provision so that they can support school improvement very well.

- The Chair of the Governing Body is extremely well-informed about safeguarding requirements. She meets frequently with the headteacher to ensure any concerns are addressed promptly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is mainly because pupils are provided with learning which captures their interests so that their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Staff know pupils very well and provide the support they need to remain on task in lessons and to behave well around school and in the community.
- The extremely positive relationships between pupils and staff are a key feature of the school's success. Staff have high expectations of the pupils, who respond well and enjoy their successes, especially through daily rewards and 'star of the week' assemblies.
- Those pupils who sometimes have difficulty managing their own behaviour are supported exceptionally well through a consistently applied behaviour policy and begin to learn self-management strategies as they go through the school.
- Pupils are keen to contribute to the life of the school and the local and wider community. Sixth-form students all take part in volunteering projects locally. All pupils contribute to fundraising for good causes, such as by dressing up as super-heroes for Children in Need.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. A global awareness week was held recently where pupils learned about food from our own and other countries and about sharing resources; it ended with sixth-form students deciding that they would like to make soup to sell to raise funds for local people who are hungry. Pupils learn to re-cycle and save energy and each class has an energy monitor who ensures paper, cardboard and plastics are saved and lights are turned off. Members of the school council were very proud to take part in interviews for a senior post in the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe and that there is no bullying. They have a good understanding of how to form positive relationships because of the extensive work the school undertakes in this area. The dangers of cyber-bullying are reinforced in all aspects of computing across all subjects.
- The school has developed excellent systems to risk assess and safeguard pupils, which enable them to try new activities on and off-site, for example, by enjoying canoeing and rock climbing.
- Students in the FE department are extremely safe when they attend alternative placements because they are supported by Red Marsh staff who ensure their behavioural and learning needs are well understood by other professionals.
- Attendance is above the average for other similar schools nationally and where pupils are absent it is almost always for health reasons.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching has improved pupils' learning and achievement since the previous inspection. Senior leaders' records of lesson observations, the school's progress data, pupils' work in files and photographic evidence and examples of teachers' planning, all show that high-quality teaching is resulting in excellent learning.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and plan different and exciting activities to ensure all groups and individuals in a class are challenged to make the best possible progress they can in every lesson. For example, in a mathematics lesson where pupils were learning about size and length, the teacher had planned tasks ranging from some pupils going round the school to identify objects of different lengths to the most able pupils beginning to predict how many cubes they would need to cover a given strip and writing out number problems. All pupils in the class were challenged to develop their mathematical skills at their own ability level.
- Teaching assistants provide excellent support for learning even though there is not a great deal of time for them to plan jointly with teachers. Nevertheless, they have benefited from shared in-service training and are proud to give their opinions on how well pupils are doing and how they might improve their learning.

- The development of pupils' communication underpins everything the school does and is threaded through all aspects of the curriculum. Staff use sign, symbols and other communication systems consistently to support pupils' communication development. The use of technology to support communication and learning, which engages pupils in all areas of the curriculum, is innovative. Pupils had great fun learning how to make robots go forwards and backwards and to pause on the squares on different board games, such as the Cinderella game which pupils thoroughly enjoyed.
- The quality of teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved pupils' reading and writing skills and some previous non-readers have now made rapid progress as a result of the focus on this area. Teaching of mathematics is now under the spotlight and planning ensures older pupils and students know how to use their problem-solving and calculation skills in everyday life.
- Teachers ensure parents are fully involved and informed about what their children are learning so that they can support homework and projects at home.
- Teaching staff work collaboratively with therapists, medical and nursing staff to ensure pupils make exceptional progress in their physical development and are cared for extremely well. All teaching assistants have clear roles and responsibilities and have developed skills to ensure they meet all of a pupil's needs.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school because teachers assess their learning very carefully to plan lessons which help each one to make the best possible progress they can. Throughout the school, pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident. They respond very well to the excellent curriculum, which provides a rich range of topics. Teachers plan tasks and activities which help pupils to build quickly on things they already know and can do and ensures new learning takes place in all lessons.
- Children in the early years make rapid progress, usually from very low starting points, because of the knowledge shared between the highly skilled staff, parents and other professionals and the establishment of positive relationships. All of this helps children settle quickly and begin to make progress, especially in their personal and social development and in their communication.
- Most pupils enter the school with poor communication skills. Through consistent use of switches, symbols, sign and assistive technology, even those with the most complex needs are able to make their needs and wishes known. The most able pupils learn to greet each other and to count and recognise colours in German, French, Spanish and Italian! Secondary pupils studied 'Romeo and Juliet' last term and were very proud to perform it to the community.
- The school has prioritised the teaching of phonics and pupils' reading, and writing achievements are impressive. In Key Stage 3 the most able pupils were reading and writing three letter words using their sounding-out skills; others were matching words or listening to a story with 'ch' sounds then going round the school to find words with the sound which had been 'planted' for them to find.
- The school now has a focus on raising pupils' already excellent mathematical achievements even higher by ensuring pupils use their understanding of time, money and measure for everyday purposes. Students in the FE department regularly use their mathematics skills to shop for food, manage budgets and weigh ingredients, all skills they will need in their future lives. The school is proud to have gained quality marks in basic skills to evidence the successes pupils and staff have achieved.
- Disadvantaged pupils who receive additional funding make at least as good progress as other pupils and sometimes better. This is because there has been a particular focus on developing their communication, sometimes through the use of technology at which the school excels.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal and social development because the curriculum incorporates aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all subjects. Arrangements for pupils to share lessons with other schools promote this aspect of their development extremely well and benefit both Red Marsh pupils and those from the partner schools. For example, students from another special school took part in an art project on orienteering and a group of children from another early years setting join Red Marsh children every week for music sessions.
- Sixth-form students in the FE department are prepared exceptionally well for life beyond school. They enjoy trying a range of courses at other colleges and achieve well at them. All achieve external awards, which demonstrate the huge progress they make in their numeracy and literacy skills as well as in their personal development.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Children enter the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding well below those which are typical for their age. Staff undertake comprehensive checks with parents and previous settings to have a clear knowledge of what children know and can already do so that their highly individualised programmes quickly develop their communication, social and physical needs.
- The quality of teaching in early years is outstanding. Occasionally children make such rapid progress in early years that they transfer to mainstream primary school placements.
- During the inspection, early years children were seen to enjoy delightful sessions in the hall which were extremely effective in developing their physical and communication skills. They enjoyed running, dancing, skipping and hopping while singing action songs. Staff constantly looked for opportunities to incorporate pre-reading and pre-number skills into the activity by recognising sounds and joining in counting songs.
- Children in the early years who have profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoy stimulating sensory activities that help them to settle. They quickly learn to be more tolerant of touch and interaction with others and show their enjoyment of the sessions by giggling and smiling and begin to learn to communicate that they want more.
- Both the indoor and outdoor areas in the early years are very safe and secure. The environment is nurturing but also stimulating. Children are provided with lots of exciting multi-sensory activities and toys that help them to learn and play. Children ride on bikes or in cars, climb and explore the resources provided. Nursery children were seen enjoying filling cups with flour, patting it down, emptying it out and starting again. Skills are extended by staff asking questions about what children are doing and this increases their learning.
- The early years is exceptionally well led and managed. Staff have developed high-level skills under the leadership of the early years teacher. Systems for checking children's progress are securely in place and planning takes into account their very different needs. Children are encouraged to develop their social skills such as turn-taking and saying, signing or exchanging symbols for snack choices. They quickly learn the behaviours they need to learn safely and happily and make outstanding progress in all areas of their development to prepare them for the next stage in their school life.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- The majority of students in the FE or sixth-form department have come through the school but students also join Red Marsh specifically for the FE provision because of its excellent reputation. Leadership and management of the sixth form (FE) are exceptionally well managed by senior leaders.
- The quality of teaching in FE is outstanding because it is so well matched to the different needs of the students. Students have a very wide range of abilities but teachers ensure they have an accurate view of the knowledge and skills of each student in order to provide them with a curriculum which will prepare them as well as possible for life beyond school in modern Britain.
- All students attend college on one day a week using different colleges and a wide range of courses to match their wishes and aspirations for the future. Students are well-supported by Red Marsh staff to ensure their safety and well-being when they attend other provisions and to check that the course work on offer is meeting their needs.
- All students enjoy three work-experience placements during their three year course, gradually building up the time they spend in these placements. They are very well prepared for these placements through their lessons in work-related learning. For those with the most severe learning difficulties this may be rehearsing the routines they need for getting up in the morning, having breakfast and getting to the placement. For those most able it may be practising the English, mathematics and other skills they might need to use on placements.
- Students mature into responsible citizens during their time in FE. They become more independent and behave exceptionally well both in school and when they are out and about in the community, where they are kept safe by light-touch staff support. Students have a good understanding of bullying in all its forms. They say there is no bullying and that staff would deal with any concerns promptly. They thoroughly enjoy their volunteering in the community, for example by sweeping leaves at the church, making tea and entertaining senior citizens and take responsibility for carrying out jobs in school.
- Students make outstanding progress during their time in FE. All leavers last year achieved the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award and all gained an external award including literacy and numeracy and a recognition of their outstanding personal and social development. Students are extremely well prepared for their future lives, with all students going onto college placements last year. Staff in the school ensure

close liaison with future providers to manage the move on from school as seamlessly as possible.

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	119897
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448938

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Naylor
Headteacher	Catherine Dellow
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2011
Telephone number	01253 868451
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