

Pictor School

Grove Lane, Timperley, Cheshire, WA15 6PH

Inspection dates 21–22 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The dedicated and inspirational headteacher of this outstanding and improving school is very well supported by her highly effective deputy headteacher. School development planning is highly effective.
- Middle managers are a strong, vibrant team determined to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. All leaders and managers work together exceptionally well to sustain the school's high standards of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's many strengths. Its members challenge and support the senior leadership team and gather first-hand information about how well the school is doing from their frequent visits.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Pupils say behaviour is very well managed; they feel very safe and enjoy their time at school.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the previous inspection and is now broadly average.
- Achievement is outstanding. From their starting points which are significantly below average for their age, all pupils make outstanding progress over time, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Early years provision is exceptional and enables children to make outstanding progress over time.
- Teaching over time is outstanding, ensuring that pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- The curriculum is exciting, stimulating and skilfully adapted to interest and engage all pupils. This helps them to understand British values and prepares them well for life in modern British society.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited most classes and carried out joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, a group of parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the finance committee.
- Inspectors looked at the school's monitoring procedures, pupils' written work and analysed information about pupils' progress and performance.
- They took account of the 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also feedback from questionnaires completed by staff.
- Procedures for safeguarding and for monitoring attendance were also considered, together with the school's improvement planning, action plans and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Maureen Coleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pictor School provides for pupils between the ages of two and 11 who have a wide range of complex learning difficulties.
- Pupils often have a combination of learning difficulties including speech, communication and language difficulties. Many also experience social, emotional, behavioural and physical difficulties. Over half of the pupils are on the autistic spectrum and have profound or severe learning difficulties.
- Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The early years operates as an assessment centre for young children. Following their assessment, some children are placed elsewhere, while others remain at Pictor for their primary education.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- A high proportion of pupils are known to be disadvantaged and are, therefore, eligible for support through pupil premium funding. (The pupil premium is additional funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school holds the Primary Quality Mark 3, the Leading Parent Partnership Award, the Schools' Financial Value Standard, and the Giving Speech Therapy Award. It also holds the Active Mark and is a nationally-accredited Healthy School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

The school has identified the right priorities in its school development plan to continue to improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and totally committed to preparing them as well as possible for the next stage in their education.
- The strong, focused leadership of the headteacher and the exceptional expertise of the deputy headteacher provide clear direction and vision for further development.
- Middle managers are highly skilled and work well together. They receive very good support from senior leaders and ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity to succeed in everything they do.
- The local authority thinks very highly of the school and provides effective support when required.
- The school has thorough and rigorous systems in place which meticulously assess, monitor and record pupils' attainment. Analysis of this information is then used exceptionally well to make sure provision is very well matched to pupils' interests and abilities. The comprehensive methods to track and assess pupils' progress have been shared with other special schools and with the local authority. The school also monitors pupils' attendance closely.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents and a range of other agencies and therapists. Parents speak very highly of the regular information they receive about their children's learning. They appreciate the support and extensive opportunities that the school provides for parents to meet and share ideas with each other, and the warm welcome they always receive when visiting the school.
- Pupil premium funding is used wisely to increase staffing, upgrade school facilities like the redevelopment of the sensory room for example, and enhance the curriculum by providing a range of interesting activities, including residential trips and visitors.
- The primary sport funding has been used very effectively to broaden pupils' experiences of different sports and activities. There is a wide range of after-school sports clubs and pupils now enjoy regular swimming sessions and opportunities to learn new skills. For example, in one lesson pupils were learning how to play curling and were successful in acquiring new skills and the mathematical language required to play the game and move the curling stones. This opportunity also provided excellent opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and understand how they could apply these skills to real-life situations.
- The curriculum is exciting and highly relevant to the pupils' needs and prepares them well for life in today's society. For example, the recent links made with a school in China have enabled teaching staff from both schools to visit each other. It has also led to Mandarin Chinese being taught in school every week.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to everything the school does and successfully deepens pupils' understanding of British values. Moreover, it creates a culture in school where instances of bullying and discrimination are rare and where everyone is treated with the utmost dignity and respect. The school fosters good relations with everyone.
- Safeguarding practices are fully in place and meet statutory requirements.
- Leaders carry out rigorous checks on teachers' work and provide guidance to staff on their strengths and areas for development. High quality opportunities for staff to extend and develop their skills are available and welcomed by all. Teaching is, therefore, led exceptionally well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly skilled, dedicated and instrumental to the school's on-going success. There is no complacency and they share the leaders' vision for further developments. Through their regular visits to school and meetings with the senior leadership, they are fully aware of the quality of teaching. They confidently challenge leaders to ensure that optimum opportunities are provided for all pupils.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the school's work to promote tolerance and cultural awareness, which prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. The governing body makes sure that the school is financially stable and oversees performance management arrangements, ensuring that teachers are appropriately rewarded for good and outstanding classroom practice. Furthermore, they ensure that teachers do not receive financial reward if they do not meet their targets for pupils' progress.
 - Members have an excellent understanding of the data on school performance and keep a close eye on the impact on pupils' achievement of the spending of additional funding.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school immensely and their positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their very good progress in literacy and mathematics.
- Staff are highly skilled in managing pupils' behaviour and demonstrate a caring, patient approach to pupils who may, as a result of their difficulties, sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour.
- Pupils are very happy and relaxed in school. Lunchtimes and break times are managed exceptionally well, with staff sensitive to the individual needs of pupils, encouraging good manners and social skills in a friendly and supportive way.
- Staff know the pupils very well and demonstrate tolerance, respect and dignity for the individual, enabling excellent relationships to flourish between pupils and staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. A calm, harmonious atmosphere permeates the whole school and ensures that pupils feel comfortable in and around school.
- Pupils are taught about the different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet. There are no recorded instances of bullying or exclusions.
- Pupils' attendance continues to improve since the previous inspection and is now broadly in line with other schools.
- Parents say that their children enjoy school. One parent, voicing the views of many, said, 'This school is exceptional and in a league of its own. Our children feel safe and happy and we are proud to be part of this school community'.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled and very knowledgeable about the individual learning needs of each pupil. They use their extensive expertise to ensure that planned activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and interests.
- Lessons, without exception, are very well planned. New learning is securely based on prior knowledge and centred on pupils' individual interests. This is particularly effective in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make) and early reading skills. Furthermore, this enables all pupils from their very low starting points to make rapid and sustained gains in literacy, reading and mathematics. For example, when studying equivalent fractions, pupils were presented with a range of problems matched closely to their individual knowledge and understanding of sharing and dividing, to distribute a pizza into equal portions.
- The school promotes the development of communication skills exceptionally well by using a variety of approaches including signing, pictures, objects and symbols. As a result, pupils gain confidence and make rapid progress in their literacy and communication skills.
- The varied assignments and impressive standard of work in pupils' books demonstrate that teaching is typically never less than good and is outstanding overall.
- Pupils benefit enormously from regular praise and encouragement about their work. Marking is consistent and clearly identifies the next steps for pupils, to help them improve their learning.
- Regular and accurate monitoring of pupils' work provides teachers with robust information about individual pupil progress and attainment, which contributes to the planning of challenging and interesting activities.
- The school has high aspirations and expectations for all. Staff are excellent role models and strive to make learning fun. For example, they generously give of their time and talents to perform a pantomime for the school community, which is used to promote a love of learning and a belief that all can succeed.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding because, in relation to their complex learning difficulties and very low starting points, all pupils make at least good progress, and most make much better progress than expected in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The high staff-to-pupil ratio enables all pupils to do very well. Pupils are able to interact with staff on a one-to-one basis and receive stimulation and encouragement to engage and complete activities.
- The large proportion of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are very well managed by staff to ensure that their behaviour does not act as a barrier to learning. As a result of this they, who are among the most

able pupils, make outstanding progress and achievement.

- Pupils eligible for additional funding make the same outstanding rates of progress as other pupils in school.
- Comprehensive and on-going monitoring of pupils' work and the use of aspirational targets, ensure that the most impressive rates of pupil progress and attainment are maintained across the school.
- Pupils are encouraged to use their understanding of phonics to support and develop a love of books and reading. The most-able readers become confident and read with understanding and expression.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in the early years make exceptional progress in their learning in relation to their very low starting points.
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met. Children behave very well and settle quickly as a result of the skilful and dedicated care given to them by all staff.
- Staff work closely with therapists and parents to ensure that the children get off to an impressive start to their school careers.
- Systems are very well established to assess the needs of children when they join the school and staff are highly skilled in identifying children's individual learning difficulties, resulting in highly effective reshaping of tasks and explanations to make sure every child makes outstanding progress.
- Progress for most of the children on a day-by-day basis can appear to be very small. However, over a period of time, at least good and outstanding progress overall is the norm.
- The classroom is welcoming, well resourced and promotes accelerated learning.
- Relationships and communication with parents are crucial to the work that the school does to build trusting and lasting links between school and home, and to promote life-long learning.
- Leadership and management of the early years are exceptional. The early years leader is very experienced and pro-active in leading her team. Nothing is left to chance and every opportunity is used to enhance children's learning experiences and successfully develop their language and communication skills.

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	106390
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	453775

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shiv Chouksey JP
Acting Headteacher	Bev Owens
Date of previous school inspection	28 May 2012
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