

Knightsfield School

Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7LW

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

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
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students' achievement is outstanding because staff have an excellent understanding of how best to promote the learning of students who have hearing impairment. They use this to cater extremely well for their needs.
- Every student leaves Year 11 with at least five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, some at the highest levels. This means many have caught up or are catching up rapidly with others of their age.
- Leaders, including governors monitor the school's work extremely well. Their vigilance and high expectations ensure that teachers are constantly challenged to raise students' achievement even more.
- Teachers' excellent oversight of students' progress and written and spoken feedback to students help them to understand what they are good at and how to improve.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding because their social and emotional needs are met exceptionally well.
- Students in the sixth form are very well supported. They achieve high grades because the outstanding provision ensures they have support that is tailored to their special needs and the courses they are studying.
- Teachers skilfully help students to make often remarkable gains in their communication and language skills. Students make huge strides in developing their self-confidence and in their ability to communicate freely with others. This enables them to learn very effectively in the subjects they study.
- Very occasionally, teachers do not routinely extend students' communication and skills in lessons other than in English.
- Students feel very safe in school and are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Safeguarding arrangements are extremely rigorous and robust.
- Excellent links with a local school and a college enable students of all ages to learn alongside their mainstream peers and benefit from their specialist subject teaching and facilities. Excellent support from Knightsfield staff whilst there or in Knightsfield itself secures their achievement on these courses very well indeed.
- There are very good partnerships with parents and carers, who are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work, how it keeps their children safe and allows them to succeed.
- Governors are extremely well informed about the school's work. This enables them to challenge leaders and to support developments very effectively.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons with the headteacher or her deputy headteacher and carried out learning walks. Other activities such as students' behaviour at the beginning and end of the days and at break times were also observed.
- The inspector heard students read and looked closely at samples of work from all year groups.
- A wide range of school documents were scrutinised, including development plans, the school's self-evaluation report, monitoring files, information on performance management, finance and safeguarding documentation and policies.
- Meetings were held with a group of students from Key Stages 3 and 4 and with students from the sixth form. The inspector also spoke informally to students, including those in the sixth form during and between lesson observations.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, two governors including the chair of governors, and teachers responsible for different aspects of the school's work.
- The inspector analysed 12 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, spoke to a parent by telephone, and took account of their comments. Evidence from the school's own parent questionnaires was also examined.
- The inspectors considered the 17 responses that were submitted to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a regional specialist sensory and physical academy for secondary-aged students with significant hearing impairment as their main need.
- Almost three quarters of the students have additional special educational needs. These include specific communication and language difficulties, dyslexia, visual impairment, specific learning difficulties and medical needs.
- The school achieved specialist status as a sensory and physical school in September 2008. It gained academy status on 1st August 2012 as an outstanding school. This is its first inspection since then.
- The majority of students are from Hertfordshire. Others are from London and the eastern regions. All travel to school by taxi or minibus.
- Students come to Knightsfield from a wide range of previous placements. These include mainstream primary schools, specialist resourced provision for hearing-impaired students attached to mainstream schools, specialist schools for the deaf and other special schools.
- One fifth of the students are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care. This is a broadly average proportion. However the numbers eligible in each year group are very small. A comparison is not made therefore in this report of the attainment between these students and others when they leave the school.
- Although the school has an above average proportion of students from a minority ethnic heritage, none are at an early stage of learning English.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans.
- The school adopts an auditory/oral approach to supporting students' communication and learning. All students have hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- There are five students in the sixth form. All are studying courses at a local college, Oaklands College or at Monks Walk School, with whom Knightsfield shares a campus. Younger students also access courses at both of these provisions.
- The headteacher provides leadership and management coaching to other special schools locally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' achievement even more rapidly by ensuring all teachers reinforce and extend students' communication and language skills in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's high expectations are evidenced in the rigour with which students' progress and teachers' work is checked. All staff work closely together to understand and address each student's unique learning difficulties. For example they are extremely effective in enabling any students who may have difficulties in controlling their behaviour to do so.
- Teachers in charge of different aspects of the school's work have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities. Their reports to governors are highly informative and focused on raising students' achievement further. They analyse students' progress and attainment carefully, explaining patterns and anomalies. Their reports are linked closely to plans for improving the school.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding. Teachers' work is carefully checked by senior leaders against professional standards including those linked to the mandatory qualification for teachers of the deaf, and against students' progress. Leaders match support and training closely to individual teacher's needs. Teachers themselves praise the way that this enables them to cater for students' needs even more effectively, as well as keep up to date with new developments that can help them improve further.
- Teachers are highly skilled and have excellent subject knowledge as well as specialist skills in promoting the learning of students who have hearing impairment. Teachers who are less experienced in working with students with hearing impairment are very well supported and appropriately trained. Consequently they quickly learn to adapt the work and their teaching approach to meet students' needs. The school has a strong focus on professional improvement at all levels. This ensures that those students who have additional learning needs such as dyslexia, visual impairment and specific language or learning difficulties have work that takes account of these needs very well.
- The pupil premium funding is used well. It provides additional, well-targeted support for students' literacy, numeracy and study skills to help them to make better progress in their learning. This means that there are no discernible differences between their achievement and that of their classmates.
- The school involves both students and their parents and carers very well in reviewing progress and setting targets and planning for the future. They take students' diverse backgrounds and needs into account and ensure that they have the resources they need to learn effectively and to participate in all of the school's provision. Consequently all have equal opportunities to learn and to achieve. Every student receives support appropriate to their needs and abilities.
- The curriculum is wide and balanced. Staff keep the curriculum under constant review to make sure it is best suited to students' needs. They expertly develop students' communication and numeracy skills. Students' experiences are enriched by whole school activities, visits and visitors. Issues and dilemmas facing the country are well discussed. All students take a qualification in citizenship that helps to prepare them very well for life in modern Britain. Different cultures and lifestyles are respected and British values promoted. A new programme of support for students' social and emotional needs alongside their language and initiatives such as 'enquiring minds' is very effective in supporting students' emotional well being and social awareness.
- There are excellent links with Monks Walk school and the college. Students benefit from specialist subject teaching and a good range of options similar to that of their mainstream peers. Mainstream colleagues receive deaf awareness training that enables them to plan to meet Knightsfield's students' needs. Trained support staff from Knightsfield also ensure that students' are included and understand their work very well. Where work-related courses are more appropriate, these are provided by the college. The school receives regular reports from mainstream teachers and their own specialist teaching assistants who support students in mainstream settings about these students' progress, attitudes, behaviour and attendance. It is quick to act if there are any issues.
- Students receive very good support and advice, including independent careers advice about the world of work. Options are very well tailored to their individual needs and interests. There is a similarly close match between their work experience and careers advice. As a result, many students have high aspirations, are

extremely well motivated by their courses and determined to achieve the levels and qualifications they will need.

- Alongside the development of its unique curriculum, the school is exploring further ways of assessing students' progress and attainment. Excellent links with other special schools and professional bodies provide a rich resource for this research. Specialist assessments for reading, mathematics and language allow student progress and difficulties in these areas to be expertly diagnosed and provided for.
- Detailed oversight of the welfare and progress of each student ensures all of them have equally good opportunities to succeed. Discussions in lessons across the curriculum, particularly in personal and social education and citizenship promote tolerance and awareness of possible discriminatory behaviour extremely well.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, are robust and well understood. Staff are well trained and students' welfare is at the heart of all the school's work.
- The school is very well supported by a range of appropriately trained and experienced consultants. They provide detailed and helpful feedback on the work of the school that helps leaders to identify priorities for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and priorities for the school. The excellent information they receive from the school and their regular visits enable them to support developments wisely and challenge rigorously. They have, therefore an excellent understanding of the progress of students and the work of teachers and clear oversight of the appraisal of staff, how this links to pay and how any underperformance is tackled. They ensure that the school fulfils all of its statutory duties including keeping students safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are eager to learn and highly attentive in lessons. Those who may have been disenchanted with school or had behavioural challenges on entry become increasingly well focused as they become more successful in their learning. As a result, their confidence grows and their progress accelerates.
- The school has a calm, harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. At breaks and lunchtimes, students are well occupied and enjoy the opportunities to socialise with their classmates.
- The causes of some students' challenging behaviour, due to their special educational needs are thoroughly investigated and sensibly addressed and very well managed by staff. As a result, they learn to deal with strong feelings in a mature way and the number of outbursts from these students declines dramatically.
- Attendance is above average and is carefully checked. Many students have full attendance. Some students have medical problems that mean they miss some school, but every effort is made to provide appropriate work for them to do at home and to help them catch-up when they return to school.
- Students are very well-consulted about their school. Their contributions are sought, valued and acted upon. Students are proud to belong to the school while benefiting from the wider world of the neighbouring mainstream school and the college. Their behaviour in these settings is also outstanding. This all sets them up very well for their next steps in education and life.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school's high quality risk assessments, rigorous procedures for safeguarding students and concern for their welfare both keep them safe and help them to feel safe. Consequently students are able to focus on their learning in all settings in

which they are placed.

- Students say they feel very safe in school and their parents agree. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and of the dangers they might meet, for example through social media sites or when travelling. The school is ever vigilant about e-safety and students are clear as to what this means. Activities, such as planning bus rides, help students to become independent and understand potential dangers.
- The students say there is very little bullying. Where there is any thoughtless or unkind behaviour, it is promptly and well addressed by staff. Excellent relationships between students and staff, and a curriculum that addresses their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development very well, combine to ensure that any issues are quickly addressed.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers' excellent knowledge of how to support the learning of students who are hearing impaired and their very strong subject knowledge lies behind the excellent progress that students make. In particular staff are expert at supporting students' listening, language and communication skills so that these develop rapidly. This, in turn, enables students to improve their literacy skills and mathematical skills and achievement in subjects, so that these too are outstanding.
- Occasionally teachers do not routinely extend students' communication and language skills in lessons so that students learn to express their ideas more fully. This means a few students do not make such rapid progress as they could.
- Teachers are highly reflective about their work. They routinely identify the things that slow down students' learning and seek the best kind of support for individual needs and abilities. This is often done in partnership with other professional colleagues, for example, the speech and language therapists and audiologists, as well as with parents. Everyone works very well together to help students who have additional learning needs to their hearing impairment succeed. Very well-targeted resources mean that students are supported to make at least the same progress as others from their starting points.
- Teachers' excellent relationships with students, underpinned by mutual respect and a use of gentle humour, encourage students to explore their understanding. Students are, therefore, anxious to contribute to lessons and this helps them to develop their speaking and listening skills very well.
- Students, including those with additional special educational needs make rapid progress in lessons because teachers use an imaginative range of ways designed to both capture their interest and make them think. They put learning into contexts that students understand, linking new learning to what they already know very well. Making an 'i-movie' for example helped students to understand the feeling of 'calm'.
- Teachers use the information that is held about students' achievements to date very well. This enables them to tailor the learning very accurately to their needs as well as ensuring that almost always students' broader language and literacy needs are taken into account. Teachers set challenges for the more able to encourage them to make faster progress. As a result, students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 gain a wide range of qualifications.
- Students' work is regularly assessed and carefully moderated with colleagues to ensure its accuracy. In addition teachers use creative ways of checking students' learning in lessons. For example, in Year 7 students wrote down the comments made by their partners onto strips of card to display their understanding of speech marks.
- Teachers use questions very well, targeting them to the abilities of individual students. This helps students to deepen their understanding, but also ensures that any misconceptions are quickly addressed and activities adapted accordingly. Through very skilful questioning, while experimenting with a range of different model cars and a machine to measure the speed accurately, students were enabled to

understand acceleration.

- Teaching assistants support students very well because they are trained well. In mainstream settings, they keep detailed notes of what is taught and how well students understand the lesson. Where students have problems, they arrange for help to be given to them.
- Teachers' marking identifies students' achievements and areas for development very well. As a result, students understand what they are good at and how to improve their work. Many students comment enthusiastically on their improved understanding since joining the school.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' attainment when they enter the school is low compared with that expected for their age. Their achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 is outstanding. This is because the school's resources are so well targeted on students' specific needs and on motivating them to try their best.
- After studying up to eight subjects, every student achieves at least five GCSEs including a qualification in English and mathematics. All Year 11 students move to courses they wish to in college or sixth forms in mainstream schools.
- Achievement across the school improves year-on-year as teachers become more skilled at identifying what has prevented individual students from learning in the past. The school's data and students' work shows that they make rapid and sustained progress from very soon after they enter the school and particularly in their key skills in language, literacy and mathematics. They make outstanding progress also in science, art, art and design, food and nutrition, humanities, computing, physical education, citizenship and personal, social and health education.
- Students' progress accelerates as they move through the school and their language and communication improve. The majority make better progress in English and mathematics than is typical for similar-aged students nationally. This means they catch-up or are catching-up rapidly with their mainstream peers by the time they leave, despite their low starting points. Their parents and carers, and students themselves are delighted.
- The more able students make similarly outstanding progress. They write lively, fluent and lengthy biographies describing their feelings and perspectives on various topics. They comment thoughtfully on differing perspectives on issues, and analyse poetry. In mathematics, they move shapes around to understand 'translation' in geometry.
- In Key Stage 3, more able students achieve Entry Level Certificate in German, ICT, music, art, and design and technology and English Speaking Board examinations. They are spurred on by these successes to aim high in their GCSEs in Key Stage 4, often gaining the highest levels as a result.
- Detailed monitoring of every student's progress ensures each succeeds extremely well, because action is swift if anyone is in danger of falling behind. There is no difference in the progress of those students who are eligible for the pupil premium and the others in the school. The funding is used to good effect to ensure such students have any additional help they need, such as extra literacy and numeracy practice.
- Students say they have to work very hard. They are proud of the progress they have made since leaving their previous schools. Their excellent attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning, whether they are in Knightsfield or in college or mainstream school.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Students' achievement is outstanding because of the school's very high expectations and the outstanding support they are given. All leave school with higher qualifications than those they had on entry to the sixth

form. More able students leave with Level 2 or 3 qualifications, for example, in sports science and equine studies. Some stay in school for an extra year before going to university to study for a degree, for example in teaching, nursing or sports science.

- Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers provide training for mainstream staff on deaf awareness and ensure excellent oversight of students' progress. Students are given highly effective tutorial support both for subject understanding and to develop their study skills. This all promotes their outstanding achievement in their courses and the skills they will need in their next stage of education and life. Outstanding teaching also ensures that students continue to develop their language comprehension and spoken language skills and that students have access to all the technological support, including the audiological support, that they need.
- Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to students' learning and are well matched to individual subjects and to the needs of students. Detailed reports allow senior leaders to monitor students' experiences and any difficulties regularly and put interventions into place when necessary.
- Behaviour is outstanding. They are very well supported by the school and become mature and thoughtful young people anxious to achieve as well as they are able. They are excellent role models for younger students.
- The school's arrangements for keeping students safe and secure are outstanding. Any safety issues are quickly identified and students say they feel very safe as they travel between sites, for example.

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	138485
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	448145

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brenda Tipping
Headteacher	Lucille Leith
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2010
Telephone number	01707 376874
Email address	admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

