

Kilgarth School

Cavendish Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH41 8BA

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher and his senior team, with the support of an exceptionally skilled and experienced governing body, have created a shared and clear vision for the school. As a result, there is extremely high morale within an exceptional atmosphere that nurtures pupils' learning and improves their behaviour.
- From very low starting points, pupils who experience significant barriers to their learning, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, make good and often outstanding progress in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Every pupil achieves some form of accreditation, including vocational courses, when they leave the school. All pupils then successfully advance into further education, employment or training.
- The quality of teaching and learning are never less than good in all subjects. The work of teaching support assistants is outstanding.
- Given the difficulties in their learning and behaviour, pupils behave exceptionally well in all contexts because of extremely skilful and sensitive management by staff.
- Pupils are exceptionally well cared for because staff ensure that all safety policies are fully and consistently implemented.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, including their growing understanding of British values, is a strength of the school's work.
- There are excellent partnerships with parents and other agencies. Staff in local schools benefit from the great expertise of Kilgarth staff when they present courses about managing pupil behaviour.
- Governors and senior leaders ensure that there is a relentless focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning and hold teachers to account for their work in the classroom. As a result, areas from the last inspection have been fully addressed.
- There is a great emphasis upon enabling all staff to develop professionally and to engage in educational research.
- School improvement plans are informative and comprehensive but lack precision in terms of how leaders and governors measure success.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all teachers, teaching assistants and classes through a mixture of lesson observations and short visits to lessons. Two lessons were jointly observed by the inspectors with senior leaders.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and two middle leaders, three governors and three local authority representatives. An inspector spoke with one other governor over the telephone.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with the headteacher and deputy headteacher from a local Teaching School.
- One inspector met with a group of Key Stage 4 pupils.
- Inspectors heard readers when they were receiving one-to-one support from teaching assistants.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in and around school, for example, at break times and when doing lessons outside.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documentation about the school's work including the school improvement plan, self-review document, information about pupils' achievements and progress, safeguarding, health and safety and behaviour policies, incident and attendance records, and governor meeting agendas and minutes.
- There were insufficient responses from the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to access, but they looked at seven returned hard copies of the questionnaire and took account of one telephone call from a parent.
- One inspector met with two parents in school.
- Inspectors received 27 returns from the staff questionnaire about the school.

Inspection team

John Ashley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for 52 pupils, all boys, between 11 and 16 years who have statements of special educational needs because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils have additional and complex needs such as attention hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorders, moderate learning difficulties, and medical or health-related needs.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding that the school receives for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school makes use of up to ten alternative providers, the main ones being: Cornerstone Vocational Training; Shaftesbury Youth Club; Utopia Project and The Vocational College, so that some pupils can complete work-based courses and vocational training.
- The school provides training in the management of pupil behaviour to local Wirral and other north west schools.
- The school has received a number of awards recently, including Investors in People Gold Award, one Gold and two Pearson Silver Teaching Awards.
- The school has a close working relationship with Weatherhead High School (which is designated as a teaching school), as partners working in the Weatherhead Teaching School Alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen and refine school improvement planning and evaluation systems so that there are clearer criteria to measure the success of agreed actions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have provided the inspiration for all staff to combine their considerable skills and talents in the pursuit of excellence in all the school's work. As a result, the issues for improvement after the last inspection have been fully addressed so that this is now an outstanding school. The local authority provides appropriate, light-touch support via the annual appraisal of the headteacher.
- Despite limitations to the building and accommodation, the way the school welcomes pupils and provides real opportunities for them is a major strength – seen in the demeanour of many of the pupils on arrival and when they meet up with their teachers and support staff in the morning.
- Senior leaders have ensured that all staff meet twice a day to discuss the progress of pupils with their learning and well-being. As a result, there is an outstanding consistency and sensitivity in the way that staff relate to and manage pupils who have complex behavioural needs. Pupils therefore become calmer and develop rapidly improving attitudes to learning so that they engage quickly in lessons. They know that if they have a problem, it will be managed appropriately and without any fuss, so that any time out from lessons is very brief.
- Leaders regularly check on pupils' attendance, especially those who have come to the school with low or even non-attendance in their previous schools. Information about behaviour incidents, fixed-term exclusions and positive handling of pupils are meticulously recorded. Interventions are consistently successful in turning round pupils with deep-seated problems. Leaders ensure that there are good levels of staff supervision when pupils attend alternative provision in terms of their attendance, behaviour and progress.
- Senior and middle leaders have worked extremely well together and in partnership with staff at the local teaching school to ensure that rigorous and regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there have been improvements that are recognised by the inspectors and which match closely the school's own judgements. For example, teachers and support staff ensure that pupils practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons. Teachers' planning takes full account of a wealth of information about each pupil's learning and abilities so that they make good or better progress from their starting points in each subject. Governors and leaders are now very well informed about the patterns and trends in pupil outcomes.
- School improvement planning is thorough and comprehensive. There are targets in place in the school improvement plan to measure the school's success, and about which governors are regularly informed. However, the criteria measuring the success of action plans do not help leaders to check precisely how well the school is doing.
- There are clear policies and procedures for staff appraisal which are rigorously applied by governors. For example, these procedures hold the headteacher and his team to account when addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. A great strength of the school and of governance is the value placed upon the continuous professional development of all staff. As a result, teaching support assistants have been able to train to become teachers. Staff have been able to pursue further academic research to explore different strategies in best meeting the complex needs of pupils.
- The school's curriculum is varied and meets the needs of pupils with significant barriers to their learning. As a result, some pupils follow flexible learning programmes that include work-based learning or vocational courses off site. These include motor mechanics, construction and hairdressing, amongst others. These pupils also attend school-based lessons and take courses in mathematics and English.
- Within school, there is a broad and balanced range of subjects that include music and Spanish. Equal opportunities are well promoted because all pupils have access to learning that they enjoy and find purposeful. They all leave with some external accreditations, each pupil advancing to further education, employment or training, benefiting from school and externally based advice about their next steps after school.
- The school has excellent arrangements through the teaching of different subjects to promote British values within spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum. For example, through opportunities provided by the Safer Schools Police Officer, pupils learn to be tolerant when talking through conflicts they might have had in school.
- Partnerships with parents, other support agencies, and particularly with other local schools are very strong. They lead to very good support for families and pupils as well as the sharing of best practices between the schools.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is a great strength of the leadership and management of the school because of the passion, professional backgrounds, knowledge and skills possessed by governors. They are well organised into different committees and are well informed about data on the school's performance by comprehensive headteacher reports and his analysis of the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes. As a result, governors hold the headteacher and his staff to account, for example, when asking how planned actions might affect families, or when making decisions about additional funding for agreed projects. They also ensure that staff are held to account for their classroom performance when confirming decisions about salary progression. Their knowledge about school improvement, however, could be further enhanced by more precise success criteria for agreed action plans. Governors were fully involved in a development day to agree the school's vision statement. They ensure that they keep up to date with safeguarding and safer recruitment training and that the school finances are purposefully used, for example, the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding. They have recently completed a governors' skills audit to identify further training needs. They keep checks upon outcomes for pupils who have received additional support in their reading and spelling, or who benefit from organised educational trips. They know that the gaps in progress in mathematics and English between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have virtually closed. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and well monitored via a named safeguarding governor.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Despite the difficulties pupils have in managing their own behaviour, staff work exceptionally well to support them to engage in their work or to develop their personal and social skills.
- The staff team is exceptionally skilled and sensitive to individual needs so that any incidents are managed swiftly and calmly. This ensures that the focus remains securely upon the importance of learning and in attending lessons. As a result, pupils rapidly improve their behaviour for learning soon after they come to the school. Behaviour in lessons, especially when pupils are settled, is typically at least good and often outstanding.
- Pupils' views about school life are regularly sought. Recent questionnaire analysis shows that all pupils have positive attitudes and value the support provided by staff. This positive view becomes more notable the longer pupils remain at the school. Pupils interviewed say that they know their behaviour targets and work hard to achieve them with staff support.
- Staff share information about pupils twice daily. They refine their approaches and lesson plans to accommodate any individual needs. This is outstanding practice because pupils recognise that staff 'go the extra mile' to support them in their learning and behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is often a concern because of their complex needs. However, whole-school attendance over time has shown an upward trend. Case study examples show the positive impact that school staff and other agencies have on improving individual pupils' attendance both in school and in alternative provision. Parents spoken to say that the school does everything it can to work with families in support of improved attendance and behaviour, for example, through home visits or behaviour workshops in school.
- Pupils move about the school responsibly. They look after the displays and the building and there are no signs of graffiti or rubbish left inside or outside. They are, on most occasions, respectful to staff, one another and visitors.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents interviewed say that they are regularly informed about any incidents in school that might affect their child.
- Pupils interviewed say that they feel safe in school and in alternative provision. During arrivals to school and departures at the end of the day, pupils behave safely and enter their classrooms to settle down with their class tutors who provide breakfast in a calm social setting. These occasions often lead to strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because pupils are encouraged to join in discussions about taking responsibility for their actions or helping others.
- The school's procedures for safeguarding and risk assessments are thorough. All staff know the procedures when reporting a concern. Record-keeping and reporting in regard to multi-agency working are exemplary.
- Staff monitor behaviour and attendance well in alternative provision so that the school knows the whereabouts of all its pupils.

- Supervision levels at all times during the day are excellent. Any behavioural concerns are swiftly dealt with to ensure all personnel are safe.
- Arrangements for the signing in of visitors and for the security of the site are strong.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- School leaders' checking of the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection has clearly led to great improvements. This is particularly evident in the use teachers make of pupils' prior and current levels of ability in English and mathematics to help their lesson planning. As a result, the quality of teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers and their support staff work extremely well to ensure that classrooms are welcoming and inspire learning. They ensure that pupils with complex learning and behavioural needs feel secure and welcomed when they come into class. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptional and non-confrontational. This means that on those occasions where a pupil might behave inappropriately, the lesson and the learning that are taking place still take priority. Any time out from lessons is short lived because pupils then return and settle to the routines and expectations required of them.
- The staff team share invaluable assessment information about each pupil so that lessons are taught with reading levels, spelling levels, understanding, learning styles and pupil attitudes in mind. For example, when younger Key Stage 3 pupils learn about British values in a personal, social and health education lesson, the most able are encouraged to work independently. They develop their knowledge and understanding about volunteering in the community by researching this topic on the internet and recording their findings. Teaching assistants are then deployed to provide light-touch support and guidance to less able pupils through skilful questioning and demonstration.
- Reluctant learners are included well in lessons because teachers and support staff provide step-by-step encouragement for them to partake. For example, pupils in a basketball lesson were encouraged to count the baskets scored by their peers or to offer 'coaching', before then trying out or practising particular skills themselves.
- Teachers and support staff work well when identifying pupils who require additional support in their reading, writing, spelling and mathematics skills. Realistic, but challenging targets are set and discussed with pupils so that they know that they will be learning particular words or terms in different subjects. Marking and feedback of their work give them motivation to practise and learn new work and take pride in their achievements.
- Teachers' careful questioning and explanations, for example in mathematics, lead to the most able pupils being able to talk through their answers while drawing upon prior learning in division and multiplication. Less able pupils gradually learn new concepts well, for example, when dividing a single number into a two-digit number. This is because teachers and support staff skilfully break down the problem and use visual clues for the pupil to secure that learning.
- The outstanding subject knowledge of specialist teachers and carefully-pitched questions ensure that all pupils are included in lessons. For example, when Key Stage 4 pupils were learning about how particles might behave when heated at different temperatures, their curiosity and interest helped to motivate them to complete a follow-up experiment. They made progress in their learning because of the teacher's excellent explanation of scientific terminology and use of careful questioning.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All pupils at the school arrive with significant barriers to their learning, mostly because of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and often missed schooling. Because of the outstanding provision they receive, most make good or outstanding progress from low or very low starting points. Overall, this represents outstanding achievement.
- By the time pupils leave the school, including those who attend alternative provision, they have gained a range of external accreditation, including up to 5 A*-G GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Governors have agreed, too, that pupils attending alternative provision should have the opportunity to take vocational courses which often then lead to successful apprenticeships, for example, in car mechanics. Over a period of five years, all leavers have gone on to further education, employment or training. The school confirms that the vast majority of last year's leavers are still attending their placements.
- Leaders provide clear information about pupils' progress from their starting points, including those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. In all subjects, including English and mathematics, the gap in

progress between these pupils is small when compared with the progress made by their peers, and closing when compared with the progress of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

- More able pupils in Key Stage 3 demonstrate that they can recall number facts and use them to solve fraction problems. They can talk through their reasoning from the beginning to the end of the problem and then reverse the process, which is strong evidence of them mastering mathematical skills.
- Pupils read regularly and with enjoyment. Less able pupils in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills are quickly identified and receive regular one-to-one support so that they gain in confidence and learn to enjoy reading and spelling activities. These gains are carefully documented so that pupils know what progress they are making and what to do to improve.
- By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate greater independence in their learning, with less reliance upon close staff support.
- All pupils are encouraged to use and apply taught skills in English and mathematics in other subjects. For example, in Key Stage 4, pupils with additional autistic spectrum disorders confidently practise their literacy skills in order to complete the writing up of experiments as part of their GCSE science course.
- The school does not enter pupils early for GCSE.

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	105130
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	447928

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Simmons MBE
Headteacher	Steven Baker
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2012
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