

Swalcliffe Park School Trust

Swalcliffe, Banbury, OX15 5EP

Inspection dates

12–13 May 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
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Teaching and achievement are outstanding. Students make exceptional progress, often from very low starting points. They achieve excellent results in a range of subjects and all are extremely well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- The school provides life-changing opportunities for all students, enabling them to enjoy learning, in some cases for the first time. Parents speak of the 'unbelievable changes' in their sons.
- Students respond extremely positively to the outstanding teaching on offer. Opportunities to learn and develop abound, both in and outside of the classroom.
- The Principal and his team lead the school with boundless energy, attention to detail and total commitment to improving the life chances of all students. As a result, the school has further improved since the previous inspection.
- Communication between the school and parents is excellent, both before students' admission and throughout their school careers.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Many students have experienced serious disruption to their previous education and require careful and consistent support with their behaviour. Students have developed excellent manners, show consideration and know that they need to behave well in order to learn.
- Students feel safe in school. Staff have detailed knowledge of each student, are highly vigilant and act promptly in order to keep students safe.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students benefit from a comprehensive range of pathways, including academic and vocational routes to employment, further education, training and supported living. Through the high quality of care and exceptionally good guidance about their next steps, students grow up into capable and self-aware young men, ready to take their place in society.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors share the same ambition and drive as the senior team and have contributed significantly to the continuing improvements made since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspector met with the Principal, other members of the senior team, middle leaders, governors, teachers and teaching assistants. The inspector also had meetings with therapists and the family liaison officer.
- The inspector observed a scheduled student council meeting and also met a group of students. The inspector spoke to two parents on the telephone.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons, accompanied by senior leaders. A sample of students' work was selected by the inspector for scrutiny.
- The inspector considered a range of school documentation, including records of behaviour, safeguarding, and students' progress.
- The inspector took into account the 16 responses on Parent View and the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Swalcliffe Park School is a smaller-than-average non-maintained special school. It caters for boys aged 11 to 19 who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions. Some students have additional needs.
- There are currently 47 students on roll, 36 of whom live in the children's homes on site. There are 18 students in the sixth form.
- All students have statements of special educational needs or education health care plans.
- Most students are White British, with a very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A large number of local authorities place students in the school. Currently, there are two students looked after by their respective local authorities.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged is much larger than the national average.
- The school admits a high number of students throughout the year.
- Most students in the sixth form also attend courses at Banbury College and Bicester College.
- The children's homes were inspected in March 2015 and judged to be outstanding.
- When the school was previously inspected, in January 2012, it was judged to be outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish the school locally and nationally as a centre of excellence for students with autistic spectrum conditions, by:
 - providing further opportunities for all staff to deepen their theoretical knowledge and pedagogical expertise
 - ensuring that good practice in teaching, managing behaviour and leadership is shared throughout the school and more widely in links with other schools and colleges.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the previous inspection the school has gone from strength to strength because of the Principal's energy, ambition and determination. Shrewd appointments have been made to the senior team and leadership has been developed among other staff. This has created a cohesive and inspirational workforce. Complacency is unheard of in the school. All staff continually look for ways to enhance students' experiences and improve their achievement in the school.
- The school's core values of the '4 Whys' (communication, self-management, independence and achievement) shine through every aspect of students' lives. Students' progress is measured against these, and this enhances the range of subjects (curriculum) taught. An extremely well-planned multi-disciplinary approach, involving key workers, tutors, therapists and other specialists, provides a strong network of support for every student.
- The Principal wisely made the decision to increase leadership capacity in the school by giving more responsibility to key middle leaders. Their roles as Assistant Principals have made a significant and direct impact on outcomes for the students. For example, information about students' well-being and behaviour is shared effectively among staff, patterns of behaviour are analysed and, as a result, students' needs are anticipated promptly and difficulties reduced.
- Communication with parents, carers and local authorities is outstanding. Long before students enter the school, careful and sensitive discussions with parents reassure them. A thorough and searching assessment of students' needs ensures that the school is the right place for them and supports a good start, often when students have had significant amounts of time away from education.
- The school is outward looking. The Principal has forged links with other schools, and staff from the school provide training and guidance about autism and safeguarding for other professionals. The school is rapidly becoming well regarded for the quality of its therapeutic work, clinical knowledge and academic study of students on the autistic spectrum.
- School leaders monitor teaching and achievement extremely effectively. Teachers and other staff expect and receive detailed and regular feedback, guidance and training. They are set challenging targets, including demanding goals related to their developing understanding of autistic spectrum conditions and students' achievement. Teachers do not progress through the pay scales if they do not meet their targets.
- Students benefit from a highly flexible range of courses. Students may follow an academic route, taking eight GCSE courses, including English, mathematics and science, providing the same level of academic rigour and high expectations as any mainstream school. Other students study functional skills to support their life beyond school. Vocational courses enable students to pursue their interests and prepare them thoroughly for employment or further training. The school also ensures that students are able to thrive in creative and practical subjects such as art and food technology. Physical education is a priority of the school and supports students' coordination, well-being and social communication, in addition to providing students with genuine recreation and enjoyment.
- The school's personalised approach to providing additional support and extra tuition for all students ensures that disadvantaged students, including those in the care of the local authority, catch up and make outstanding progress alongside all other students.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Students learn about different religious faiths and cultural beliefs. Through regular tutorial sessions during the school day, students have opportunities to discuss current topics and explore their ideas about the wider world. The school grasped the opportunity to promote and develop students' understanding of British values through an impressive project on London. Students contributed to organising a trip for the whole school, exploring British institutions and values such as monarchy, tolerance, democracy, fair play, invention and freedom. The outcomes from the trip also linked with the school's own election campaign which inspired many students.
- Students take part in regular sports and drama events. They have opportunities to participate in music and take instrumental lessons. Students make the most of the resources on the school site, including safe exploration of the grounds and horticultural enterprises.
- From admission to the school, plans are made to ensure that students have everything they need to take their place in society as well-rounded, successful and healthy young men. Guidance about students' next steps gathers momentum from Year 9 and throughout Key Stages 4 and 5. In this way, equality of opportunity is assured and no student suffers from any discrimination because of his special educational needs.
- The school makes highly effective use of a school improvement partner to validate their evaluation of

teaching and to analyse students' results.

- The well-regarded student council is another crucial facet of the outstanding leadership of the school. Students are democratically elected; attend meetings every half term with senior leaders and a governor. They take their responsibilities extremely seriously and debate their concerns and plans with notable confidence and conviction.
- All aspects of safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Record keeping is thorough and used to identify patterns and reduce risk. Relationships with local authorities are strong. School leaders are vigilant and successfully challenge students' mindsets, particularly if there is risk that their interests may make them vulnerable to extreme views.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are highly strategic, expert in their different roles and focused on the best outcomes for students. They not only share school leaders' ambitious vision, but also push for even better results. Through their careful evaluation and monitoring of the school and their support for the Principal's staffing decisions, they rightly feel that the school is in an even better position than it was at the time of the last inspection. They know exactly how well students are progressing and how effective teaching is, and are not afraid to challenge the Principal to provide more evidence for his regular reports.
- Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's finances, including staff pay progression. They ensure that the school is financially stable, without compromising on essential improvements and projects that will benefit students, especially those who are disadvantaged and in the care of the local authority.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Many students have been excluded from their previous schools, missed significant amounts of education or spent time in hospital before their admission. Students' behaviour improves significantly during their time at the school. In a very short time, they demonstrate clearly that they understand and fully accept the importance of courtesy, respect for themselves and each other and the need for self-management.
- The attendance of students improves hugely while they attend the school. School leaders ensure that all students attend school if they are fit to do so and provide extra support for students who find good attendance particularly difficult.
- School leaders insist upon the highest expectations of students' attitudes, while demonstrating a sensitive understanding of anxieties that may lead to inappropriate behaviour. Students want to learn and succeed; low-level disruption to learning is extremely rare.
- A firm line is taken with any behaviour that puts other students at risk, without compromising high standards of care to support students' self-regulation. Exclusions and incidents requiring physical intervention are few and far between, and when they occur are investigated and reviewed thoroughly. Students are extremely well supported to develop their resilience and ability to 'bounce back' after what they might previously have seen as catastrophic setbacks.
- Students greatly appreciate the school's consistent use of rewards and incentives to develop outstanding behaviour. It is impressive to see how well motivated they are, even when the goals they are aiming for are very demanding or distant.
- Relationships between students and between staff and students are warm and respectful. Students genuinely value the work staff do to support and help them. Close relationships contribute strongly to students' developing ability to empathise with other people. As one parent told the inspector, 'My son is now engaged in life outside of himself.'
- On arrival at the school, some students experience difficulties settling down. Careful support ensures that any incidents of bullying, name calling or conflicts rapidly reduce in number. Students understand and follow the school's guidance on avoiding bad or derogatory language. As a result, students are happy, self-aware, outgoing and increasingly tolerant of differences.
- During their time at the school, students develop excellent social skills, including turn taking when speaking, listening to each other and showing good manners to staff and visitors alike.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.

- Detailed and frequent communication among staff ensures that students' well-being is the central focus of all the work of the school.
- Students understand about potential risks to their safety and are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- When concerns are reported, prompt and effective action is taken to minimise risks.
- Staff's commitment to keeping students safe and reducing risk is clearly visible in all their day-to-day work. Frequent high-quality training ensures that their practice and procedures are completely up to date.
- All staff contribute to maintaining a safe environment, whether around the site or when students are using the internet.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- Outstanding teaching in the school is underpinned by extremely high expectations of all students in a secure and compassionate environment. Students are set work that challenges, interests and inspires them to do their best. No excuses are made for previous shortfalls in students' progress; teachers use materials and resources that match those seen in mainstream schools, crucially making the most of students' specific interests. Students who have missed education or are reluctant to participate in lessons quickly change their habits when they join the school.
- Teachers skilfully weave into lessons vital opportunities to develop students' communication skills, vocabulary and subject knowledge. In this way, students develop better literacy and numeracy skills throughout the curriculum and become highly articulate. Many students speak confidently and fluently, with an extensive and sophisticated vocabulary.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully with each individual student in mind. They 'think on their feet' and respond to students' answers and work during the lesson, amending their focus, extending and supporting where appropriate. Standards are high and students have confidence in their teachers.
- Teachers assess students accurately and provide top quality feedback and guidance. Students take feedback seriously and act upon the advice given. They are rightly proud of their well-maintained portfolios, which show a running record of their weekly progress towards their targets. During the inspection, students were keen to show the inspector their work in different subjects and talk about their progress. All students know what they are aiming for and how to get there.
- Teaching assistants are deployed skilfully and imaginatively to support students. They specialise in subjects, providing valuable continuity and additional expertise. They provide emotional support and also challenge students academically to work things out themselves.
- Students' interest in wider reading and reading for pleasure has developed significantly since the last inspection, with a competitive reward scheme. Even reluctant readers enjoy selecting books that challenge them and fulfil their interests.
- Students benefit from precisely tailored extra help for numeracy and literacy. Particularly successful are specific programmes to increase students' confidence in spelling, reading and handwriting. Sequences of extra lessons are carefully planned and evaluated to ensure that students make the maximum progress to enable them to access all subjects.
- Students also greatly appreciate the additional revision classes and opportunities to complete homework tasks and preparation for lessons.
- School life is rich with other opportunities for learning, through enterprise and extra-curricular activities, all of which enhance the timetabled lessons.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- Students learn exceptionally well from their varied starting points in the school. Many students have missed significant periods of time in education, so have to catch up. From their arrival at the school, they make rapid progress and no students leave the school without the qualifications or skills they need for their next steps.
- Students are set ambitious targets, based on their prior attainment, using National Curriculum levels. On admission, school leaders ensure that students are assessed carefully using the school's own baseline, which generates a current and precise target. Students' progress is then tracked and measured against the most aspirational target. In this way, there is no ceiling on students' achievement; students are pushed to achieve their best, often surpassing national expectations of progress in mainstream schools.
- Achievement in English is impressive. Many students have experienced severe difficulties with inference skills, writing, spelling and composition. Outstanding teaching, including additional support where appropriate, turns around students' reluctance to write and their negative view of their abilities. As a

result, students' rates of progress in English match or exceed that of students in other schools.

- Achievement in mathematics is a particular strength. Students attain results and make progress that compare favourably with that of students in mainstream schools.
- The school is rightly proud that all students meet or exceed their targets in English and mathematics, with all attaining a relevant qualification by the time they leave the school.
- Higher functioning and more able students in the school are given every opportunity to achieve results in all their subjects so that they are able to take their places on level 3 courses in further education. Their achievement matches that of students in mainstream schools.
- Disadvantaged students, including those in the care of their respective local authorities, do as well as other students in the school in English and mathematics.
- The small number of students from minority ethnic groups also achieve as well as other students in the school.
- Students all have the opportunity to study a broad and balanced curriculum, attaining high standards and making excellent progress in a range of subjects in addition to English and mathematics. For example, students progress extremely well in information technology courses and attain high results in science. They also do exceptionally well in practical and creative subjects, notably art in which many students achieve higher results than expected, producing stunning artefacts. Physical education is given a high priority on students' courses, and although some students find it challenging because of their special educational needs. All make excellent progress and show tangible improvements in their physical control and well-being.
- No students leave the school without entering employment, further training or education. As one parent stated 'my son has a future now'.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students make exceptional progress in the sixth form. Most students attend vocational courses at local colleges. Other students follow mainstream courses, preparing them well for advanced programmes when they leave the school. Many are given further opportunities to gain qualifications in English, mathematics and their other subjects, particularly if they require extra time to help them catch up. Expectations are extremely high and each student's personalised programme is meticulously monitored to ensure outstanding progress and preparation for life beyond school.
- Students who enter the sixth form having been out of education or from other schools also benefit from flexible tailored programmes to meet their needs and interests.
- No students leave the sixth form without the qualifications and skills they need. All sixth form students go on to further education, training or employment.
- School leaders have scrutinised the provision and quality of teaching and achievement in the sixth form and taken highly effective steps to develop older students as a unique group. For example, sixth form students have their own dedicated study area and also some appropriate privileges to suit their age and maturity.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding. As one student told the inspector, 'We are respected and expected to act like adults.'
- Students are safe in the sixth form. Students are given specific support to help increase their independence, including those who will be starting employment or supported living. As a result, students are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps, and their pathways from school to employment or training are smooth and stress free.

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	123331
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	461595

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Stoertz
Principal	Kiran Hingorani
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 January 2012
Telephone number	01295780302
Fax number	01295780006
Email address	admin@swalcliffepark.co.uk

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