

The St Marylebone Church of England Bridge School

17–23 Third Avenue, London, W10 4RS

Inspection dates

9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors have a clear vision for the development of the school, which is shared effectively with the school community. They know where they want to be, and how to get there.
- Rigorous and robust systems are in place to check the quality of teaching and to address any issues that arise. These demonstrate improvements in teaching over time. The quality of teaching is good.
- Leaders seek advice and guidance from a range of sources, including other mainstream and special schools, in order to validate their work. This means that they make secure judgments about the quality of provision at The St Marylebone Church of England Bridge School.
- Students are making good progress as a result of effective teaching. Teachers work closely with therapists to ensure that each individual student's needs are addressed throughout the day.
- Leaders closely monitor the school's work and intervene when necessary to ensure that teaching improves and achievement remains strong.
- Students behave well and treat each other with respect. They are involved in making decisions about the life of the school.
- Students are kept safe in school and on external trips and visits. Students are taught how to keep themselves safe when in the community and online.
- Students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. As a result of close collaborative working between teachers, therapists and support staff, the curriculum is delivered in a way that is suited to students' needs.
- Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. The school bases its ethos on the values of gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, patience, harmony, peace, compassion and wisdom. These values pervade all areas of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching over time is not outstanding.
- The systems for recording behavioural incidents, and identifying patterns, improvements or concerns are at an early stage of development. The current system is not sustainable in the longer term.
- Some students do not take enough pride in their work, and teachers do not consistently reinforce the importance of presenting their work well.
- Students do not consistently respond to teachers' questions or comments about their work in their books.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in six lessons taught by five teachers. She also made short visits to other lessons and accompanied a group of students as they visited the nearby park and swimming pool.
- She held meetings with senior leaders and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Telephone conversations were held with an educational consultant and a local authority representative who work with the school.
- The inspector observed students at breaks and lunchtimes, and spoke with them about their experiences in school. She met with small groups of students more formally to gather their views and to hear them read.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised. This included minutes of governing body meetings, information about safeguarding, reports on students' progress and the school's records of the quality of teaching.
- The inspector scrutinised the work in books from a sample of students.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through looking at the school's analysis of recent questionnaires. Almost two-thirds of parents responded to this questionnaire. There were no responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also considered 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gaynor Roberts, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2013 and now has a total of 22 students on roll in Years 7 and 8. The school will continue to expand year on year, with 12 places in each year group.
- All students have difficulties with speech, language and communication. Some have additional difficulties relating to autistic spectrum disorder or social, emotional and mental health needs. The majority of students come from the tri-borough partnership of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham. All have a statement of educational needs.
- The school was set up as an academy free school by the affiliated mainstream secondary school, The St Marylebone Church of England School. The schools have separate governing bodies. Some governors are appointed by the governing body of The St Marylebone Church of England School, including the Chair. The headteacher of the mainstream school also sits on the governing body and acts as executive headteacher of this school. Some subject specialist teachers from the mainstream school deliver lessons in this school, either on this site or on the mainstream school site.
- Having opened in temporary accommodation co-located with the affiliated mainstream school, the school moved to larger premises in November 2014.
- The current head of school has been in post for only a few weeks, having previously been the deputy headteacher in the school.
- Around three quarters of the students are boys, as is typical for this type of school. The proportion of students who are eligible for pupil premium funding is double the national average. In this school, the funding supports students who are eligible for free school meals. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also significantly above average.
- More than three quarters of the students are from minority ethnic groups. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has not yet had a section 48 inspection of religious education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop robust and rigorous systems for the monitoring of student behaviour which are sustainable in the longer term. These should enable leaders to identify patterns, improvements or areas of concern regarding individual students' behaviour.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - engendering a greater sense of pride in the students' work by both teachers and students
 - insisting that students always produce work that is presented well
 - ensuring that where the marking of work requires the student to respond, they have the opportunity to do so.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have a clear and coherent vision for the school. They have secured the confidence of the staff team, parents and students and are passionate about providing the best possible opportunities for the students within their care.
- The very strong ethos, based on the biblical values of gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, patience, harmony, peace, compassion and wisdom, encompasses all of the school's work. These values are depicted in visual form in each teaching area and throughout the school. Students can recall what these values are, and what they mean. Any student demonstrating one of the values is rewarded with a letter to their parents explaining how they have done so. This strong ethos gives students a shared sense of community.
- Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum, based on the national curriculum and adapted to meet the needs of the learners in the school. Opportunities to develop speech, language and communication skills are adeptly woven through each curriculum subject as a result of the close working between therapists and teachers. Where the small staff team lack expertise in a particular subject, such as music, they draw upon the expertise of specialists in the affiliated mainstream school. The highly individualised approach ensures equal opportunities for all.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is a strength of the school. As a voluntary-aided faith school, there are strong links with the Anglican church, but students learn about all the major religions in depth. Religious education lessons are supported by the school chaplain, whether the content of the lesson is specifically Christian or not. Many of the students are not from Christian backgrounds but all are respected and their views valued. Students benefit from a wealth of opportunities to visit places of cultural interest, such as theatre trips. The school's work to ensure social development is particularly strong, as many of the students have difficulties in this area. This promotes positive friendships and develop tolerance and understanding between students.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have designed a display explaining why they feel that 'Britain is great', they visit places of historical importance and experience democracy through elections for school council members. Students could explain to the inspector what impact the newly formed school council has had in terms of the introduction of hot lunches, increase in recycling opportunities and refinements to the behaviour systems.
- As a newly opened small special school, leaders have not yet appointed a middle-tier of leadership, therefore no comment can be made on the effectiveness of middle leaders.
- School leaders have ensured that the requirement to provide careers education to those in Year 8 is met. During the inspection, Year 8 students were writing job application letters as part of an English unit of work. The school works alongside the careers adviser from the affiliated school and has drawn up a programme of work to be completed as students move through the school. This provides evidence that the school's capacity to improve as it expands is strong.
- School leaders ensure that additional funding received for those eligible for free school meals or those who did not achieve the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 2 is carefully allocated to best effect. They have, for example, employed an art therapist to support some students. It is too early to judge the full impact of this.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements. Referrals made to other agencies when concerns arise are rigorously followed up. The designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained, and two other senior leaders are also trained to cover the role in his absence. A suitable number of governors and leaders have been trained in safer recruitment practices. The school's checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are complete and robust. Staff receive regular training in aspects of safeguarding and child protection. They have recently received training in protecting children from the dangers relating to terrorism. However, at the start of the inspection, staff had not read the statutory guidance, *'Keeping children safe in education'*, first published by the Department for Education in April 2014. This oversight was addressed during the course of the inspection.
- Leaders commission support from a range of sources, including the local authority, the affiliated school and an outstanding special school catering for students with similar needs. Leaders are skilled in identifying what support they need, and who would be best placed to provide it effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The highly effective governing body knows the school well. The regularity of governors' visits to the school, and the discussions recorded in governing body minutes demonstrate their commitment to, and interest in, the development of the school. They acknowledge the key role of therapists in developing the provision and consider the inclusion of a therapist on the senior leadership team to be vital in

meeting the school's objectives.

- Governors are involved in the performance management of the head of school. They ensure that their discussions are informed by the advice and guidance of an external consultant who works regularly with the school. Governors also receive information about the performance of teachers. As the school will not directly employ teachers on a permanent basis until September 2015, this information has not informed any discussions regarding pay.
- Governors receive regular reports on the progress of students. Governors ask pertinent and probing questions of leaders to make sure that the school is doing all it can to promote the progress of students. They are knowledgeable regarding the quality of teaching in the school.
- Governors know how additional funding, such as pupil premium funding, is spent. They are aware that these extra funds support highly personalised opportunities, including individual tuition, art therapy and therapeutic horse riding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students move around the school sensibly and safely. They are polite and well mannered. Students know and understand the school's behaviour system, which is visually displayed in all classrooms and shared areas. They told the inspector that members of staff implement the system fairly if anyone misbehaves.
- As a result of positive relationships, students' attitudes towards learning are good. They attend well in lessons, supported when necessary by skilled support staff and visual systems. Occasionally, they lose focus and start to chat amongst themselves, or answer back to the teacher. These occurrences are dealt with swiftly and effectively by members of staff.
- Students are encouraged to forge friendships with a range of other students, rather than sticking to the same friendship group. Effective strategies are used to promote this, such as the allocation of each student to a chair of a particular colour at lunchtime. Therefore, even the least outgoing student has friends in other tutor groups. Students all get on well together. As one student told the inspector, 'It doesn't matter what colour or religion you are.'
- Similarly, at breaks and lunchtimes students play well together. Members of staff instigate games which students enjoy joining in. The consistency of staffing, with teachers, support staff and therapists supervising break times, further supports good behaviour because expectations are consistently high throughout the school day.
- Overall, attendance is below the average for secondary schools but compares well with that in other special schools. The school works effectively with other agencies to promote good attendance and, as a result, some persistent absentees have improved considerably in this regard. The school has robust systems for following up absence on a daily basis.
- Any issues or concerns, about students' behaviour or otherwise, are logged and discussed by the whole staff team on a daily basis. This ensures that all members of staff have all the relevant information when dealing with students. However, there is no robust system for the recording and reporting of any incidents, or analysis of information about improvements in students' behaviour. The current logging system does not record information on an individual basis and is not sustainable.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All parents responding to the school's recent questionnaire say that their child is safe at school. Students and the inspector agree.
- Rigorous systems are in place to ensure the safety of students when they are off-site on trips or visits. Students could describe measures taken by members of staff to make sure they were safe on a trip to the Houses of Parliament which took place during the inspection. Effective risk assessments are completed for even the shortest trips to the park next to the school or the journey to the swimming pool nearby.
- The school takes appropriate actions to ensure that partisan or inappropriate views are not expressed within the school. The school has a policy for visitors which emphasises the need to safeguard students. All visiting speakers are agreed by the head of school prior to the visit being confirmed.
- Students say that there is no bullying because 'we all treat each other the same'. Daily behaviour logs show that incidents of bullying are rare, and dealt with swiftly because of the high level of awareness of staff. The one racist incident which has occurred since the school opened has been robustly and comprehensively recorded. This record includes actions taken to teach the student involved about appropriate language to use.
- The school has an appropriate e-safety policy, and students can recall strategies they have been taught to

keep themselves safe online.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers and therapists work in a highly effective, collaborative manner. This ensures that the curriculum is delivered using methods that consistently address the speech, language and communication needs that students experience. For example, therapists and teachers plan activities together and therapists work alongside teachers and other adults in the classroom. Consequently, therapists can ensure that the special educational needs of students are met, and they fully understand the content of the lesson. As a result of this collaborative working, students make very good progress in speaking and listening, and good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers plan lessons that are carefully matched to the needs and abilities of students. This is because they have good knowledge of the level at which each individual is working. Most teachers teach more than one subject, and use their knowledge of each individual's skills in literacy and numeracy to inform their planning in all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Classrooms and other teaching areas demonstrate a very high level of consistency. Each teaching area has displays depicting expectations relating to behaviour and aspects of 'active listening' and of 'skilled speaking'. The school's preferred strategy to support writing and grammar is also displayed visually in each classroom. This means that as students move from lesson to lesson, they can access visual reminders of the key strategies used in the school to support their learning.
- All members of staff have high aspirations for students, and these are passed on to the students themselves. One Year 7 student told the inspector that the school had enabled him to access some mathematics activities at GCSE level already.
- Teachers plan lessons that are relevant to students and engage their interest. In one science lesson observed, students used sweets to recreate the formation of igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks. They worked together to apply pressure to their 'rocks' by placing them under a table top and all standing on the table at the same time. The lively presentation and skilful methods used by the teacher ensured that all students were fully engaged, learnt the key vocabulary and made good progress in the session.
- A wide range of systems are in place to check the quality of teaching. These include observations in lessons, scrutiny of information about students' progress and regular work scrutiny. The information gathered from these activities is rigorously recorded and analysed to provide leaders with an accurate view of where the strengths and weaknesses lie. As a result, they are able to pinpoint training and support for teachers in order to improve their practice effectively.
- Other adults in the classroom support learning well. They use clear language to issue instructions, and to praise and encourage students. Questions are carefully framed to maximise students' understanding and allow them to develop their thinking further.
- Members of staff do not, however, have consistently high expectations in terms of the work produced by students. Some work is untidy and poorly presented. There are some students who doodle or add graffiti to their books, which is not challenged by teachers. Sometimes teachers are prepared to accept a poor standard of presentation when it is clear that the student is capable of better.
- The school has introduced a policy for marking and feedback to students on their work. Most of the time, work is marked according to this policy and students receive appropriate advice on ways to improve their work. However, when teachers ask students to correct or extend their work, they are not always given the opportunity to do so. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they are capable of.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- All students on roll have special educational needs in relation to speech, language and communication. They enter the school at levels of attainment below those which would normally be expected for their age. As the school currently has students in only Years 7 and 8, there is no published information regarding their achievement since entering this school.
- When students join the school, they undergo a comprehensive baseline assessment. This includes assessments in terms of speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics. Speech and language therapists also carry out detailed clinical assessments of students' communication skills. Leaders compare this information to that from the students' previous placements. They work out the rate of progress each individual made during Key Stage 2, and set targets based on each student making more rapid progress during Key Stage 3. This shows that leaders have high expectations of students with regard to

achievement.

- The school carries out termly assessments in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics to check that students are on track to meet these challenging targets. Where students are at risk of failing to meet their target, leaders plan additional support activities which are precisely focused on the students' next steps in learning. The impact of these additional activities is carefully monitored to ensure they are having the required impact. Consequently, the rate of students' progress increases.
- Leaders ensure that the assessments they complete are secure by working alongside several other schools to check that their judgments about the progress and attainment of students are accurate.
- Students are making good progress. In writing, almost all students in Year 7 had made the expected progress for a year in just two terms. In reading, more than half have done so, and over a quarter in mathematics. Year 8 students are making similar good progress, with over half of the group making the expected progress for a year in just two terms in reading, writing and mathematics. Information relating to the current Year 8's first full year in the school shows that a very high proportion made at least expected progress in speaking and listening.
- As a result of a highly individualised approach, and high expectations of leaders and managers, more able students make at least as much progress as their peers within the school.
- Due to the low number of students on roll and the special educational needs of students, it is not possible to quantify the relative achievement of groups of students. However, the school's information shows that those who are eligible for free school meals, or those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers. Girls make similar progress to boys.

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	139600
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	450218

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Mountford
Head of school	Dominic Sunderland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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