

RNIB Three Spires Academy

Kingsbury Road, Coventry, CV6 1PJ

Inspection dates 30 June–1 July 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 |
| Early years provision | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership and management, including effective support from the Trust and governors, ensure that teachers are supported and trained well. Hence, they are equipped to do a good job.
- Therapies to help improve their communication, including speech, along with the wide range of subjects they study enable pupils to make the most of their life chances.
- Pupils' understanding of democracy is promoted well through their involvement in electing the school council. Representatives on the council consult with their peers about issues that they would like to change.
- Pupils learn tolerance of other faiths and cultures.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe.
- Teaching is good. It is flexible and meets a wide range of pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils grow as successful learners.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good gains in communicating their needs and in their personal development.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is improving because leaders are ambitious and always striving to achieve more.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Assessments of pupils' ongoing work are sometimes not used sufficiently well to set activities at the correct level of challenge.
- Information and communication technology equipment is not good enough to improve the communication of pupils with the most complex needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 10 lessons taught by different teachers. Four of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work across the school. They also listened to pupils read in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher from the Trust and another Trust member, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, leaders of English and mathematics, and other members of staff. A discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Discussions were held with the school's pupil council.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents, including those relating to pupils' academic and social progress, school self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum and assessment, statements of special educational needs and keeping pupils safe.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) for a reliable analysis to be provided. However, inspectors spoke with parents who attended a parent evening during the inspection. Inspectors also looked at 28 Ofsted questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Lyn-Cook

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- RNIB Three Spires Academy provides for pupils aged 3 to 11 with moderate or severe learning difficulties, but many also have additional disabilities.
- All pupils have statements of special educational needs (currently being transferred into 'education health care plans'). Their additional needs include autistic spectrum disorder, sensory impairments and epilepsy. Some exhibit challenging behaviours.
- Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils are taught in class groups of up to ten. Key Stage 2 classes are slightly larger at 13 or 14 pupils.
- The school has a full-time class of 10 Early Years children based at its partner RNIB school.
- There are significantly more boys on roll than girls.
- An above average proportion of pupils, are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and for children who are looked after).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the number of pupils from homes where families speak English as an additional language. These pupils experience the same communication difficulties as their peers, reflecting their special educational needs.
- The school is part of the RNIB Special Education Trust. The school became an academy in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in all subjects, so as to raise achievement, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently use assessments about what pupils know and can do to set them work at the correct level of challenge to move them on to new learning more quickly.
- Improve the quality of information and communication technology equipment to support pupils with the most complex needs in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Trust, governors and senior leaders have created a challenging and nurturing culture where all pupils have an equal chance to do well. Each pupil accesses a good quality education and there is no room for discrimination of any type. The headteacher's vision to develop confident, happy and successful learners is shared by staff.
- Therapists work in an effective partnership with education staff to develop pupils' communication and personal skills.
- Senior leaders check the impact of teaching on learning. Based on monitoring of teaching and looking at pupils' work they provide training for teachers. Teachers respond enthusiastically and most have improved their practice this year.
- Leaders know the school well. Their analysis of the school's provision is used to set targets for further improvement. For example, following a recent investigation as to why progress in writing lagged behind that of reading and mathematics, decisive action was taken. Teachers were given additional training in a new programme and consequently the rate of progress in writing, particularly for pupils with the most complex needs has increased.
- Leadership of the early years enables pupils to become ready to learn by being equipped with improved communication skills and the ability to manage their own behaviour to succeed.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is good. The leader for English has planned and implemented new approaches that have impacted on reading and writing. The leader of mathematics is improving the subject across the school and recognises that moderation in mathematics could be better.
- The curriculum is broad, relevant and flexibly tailored to the needs of pupils. There is a progression route for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, so that they fully access the new National Curriculum at an appropriate level. Modifications are made for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder, with a strong emphasis on communication and developing independent living skills. The use of information and communication technology is not as good as it should be, especially for pupils with the most complex needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show respect for different peoples' feeling and values, and have opportunities to use their imagination and creativity in learning. At an appropriate level pupils explore ethical issues and are encouraged to resolve conflicts effectively. Pupils celebrate diversity and learn about Indian music, for example, and religious festivals such as Eid and Diwali.
- The school focuses on encouraging pupils' awareness of the British values of tolerance and liberty. The displays in the entrance to the school express these values. All pupils are included. Pupils are, consequently, well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. Senior leaders are trained in how to detect sexual exploitation and have had recent training on female genital mutilation. They have also been trained to protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation. There are detailed risk assessments for pupils in vulnerable circumstances. Child protection procedures are robust. All safeguarding training, including safe-recruitment training, is up to date.
- The school makes good use of its additional pupil premium funding. Pupils benefit from the rewards of effective support, enabling them to make good progress. It also funds programmes, such as occupational therapy and sensory diets that enable pupils to be in a good place to learn.

- Primary physical education and sports funding is used wisely, enabling pupils to respond to the trim trail that contributes to their development of balance, agility and coordination. The outdoor gym enables pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to become ready to learn.
- The school has a good partnership with parents who say they greatly value annual reviews, also that they are listened to, and are helped to support their children's feeding and toilet programmes at home. Parents also appreciate workshops, like how to sign with their children.
- The Trust has given valuable support and challenge to the school through the executive headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Most governance is provided by the RNIB Specialist Learning Trust, through the executive headteacher. However, the local governing body provides effective challenge and support for school improvement. It has a good understanding on teaching in the school and is working with the headteacher to further develop the curriculum and assessment procedures.
 - The executive headteacher works with the headteacher to bring rigour to the process of budget setting and establishing a viable staffing structure. The Trust has led on significant improvements to the school building.
 - Governors receive regular detailed reports from the headteacher and ask challenging questions about pupil progress, health and safety and current education matters.
 - Governors and the Trust hold the headteacher to account for spending on pupil premium and sports funding.
 - The Trust has responsibility for statutory policies, but is now ready to devolve more powers to the local governing body. The Trust has a clear approach to checking how well the headteacher performs and sets him rigorous targets. The headteacher manages the performance of staff, and this is overseen by the Trust which ensures that decisions on pay are linked to pupils' progress.
 - The business manager (across three schools) ensures that all statutory policies are in place. The Trust ensures that all legal requirements for safeguarding are met.
 - There is good co-operation between the academy Trust and the local governing body.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and in most lessons concentration is good, because pupils want to succeed.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in helping pupils with autistic spectrum disorder overcome anxiety and focus on learning. When on occasions these pupils wander off task, they are swiftly brought back and re-engaged with learning.
- The school is orderly and calm. There is no litter. Quality displays are looked after.
- Pupils value rewards for behaving well. On the few occasions when they do not behave well they miss 'golden time' at the end of the day, but this is rare because they have the opportunity to redeem their misbehaviour before arriving at this point.
- There have been no racist incidents this year or homophobic bullying incidents. Bullying is exceptionally rare. There are no exclusions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Risk assessments are thorough and take account of the individual needs of pupils in different contexts.
- Visitors to the school are carefully vetted. Trips out of school are scrupulously checked for safety.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and happy at school. Those able to talk using words said that they have a trusted adult in school to go to and share concerns. Others signed this to the inspector.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand why they wear helmets on their bicycles and how to keep safe when working in the school's garden.
- Attendance is average, but is affected by the health and medical needs of pupils (particularly seizures).

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Throughout the school, the teaching of English (particularly communication) and mathematics is good, as is teaching in the early years.
- Teaching focuses on developing pupils' communication and life skills. For example, in mathematics while dealing with percentages, including finding different percentages, the most-able pupils connect this skill with going shopping. Similarly, in the teaching of reading, there is a sharp focus on developing pupils' life skills to check understanding of what they need to read in the community and to enable them to problem solve, like, for example, what bus to get on.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and planning are good, as is their understanding of a wide range of special educational needs within their classes. This knowledge and understanding are used to good effect to help pupils to learn effectively.
- Overall, relationships are good in lessons and effective use is made of questioning to check pupils' understanding. However, sometimes assessment of what pupils can do is not sufficiently used to set them activities at the correct level of challenge.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils and work well in partnership with teachers. They understand the pupils' needs well and respond quickly to deal with any personal issues as well as difficulties with work. The school does not have quite enough teaching assistants to support those with the most complex needs because of recruitment difficulties in the recent past. However, leaders are actively tackling this issue and close to a solution.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children in the Nursery make good progress from low starting points. Children experience letter and number shapes through a range of activities supported by interesting resources.
- Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Attainment is different for each pupil because of their different needs. Progress in communication (ranging from using signs and pictures through to expressive language) is good.
- Progress in reading is good. For some, this means finding words and expressing them well, for example as seen in a lesson where the words 'Floppy got tired' were read with confidence. The most-able have the phonic skills to break up words, including tricky words, like 'miserable' and gain good comprehension skills. Others read using pictures and a few interpret sensory actions by the teacher showing that they love the story.
- Progress in writing is good. The most-able can join up words and can write a sentence like, 'I want to be better at playing football'. Others copy over single words practising the pencil skills they have learnt. A few cannot write and the school knows that it needs to purchase more computer equipment, so that when they sound a word the computer can write it down.
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- Mathematics progress, also good, ranges from pupils being able to find different percentages and apply what they learn to shopping, through to others who find it hard to grasp the meaning of number, but still

have useful experiences such as feeling cut out numbers. The most-able calculated 50% and 25%, and those with the highest ability went on by themselves to find different percentages and this was linked to shopping.

- Throughout the school pupils make good progress in a number of subjects as evidenced in their work. However, progress in information and communication technology lags behind that of other subjects reflecting old equipment, and this sometimes limits the progress of some pupils with the most complex needs.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding and minority ethnic pupils. Girls are fewer than boys, but achieve equally as well as boys. The most-able pupils are extended and stretched well because teachers are aware of these pupils' abilities and make sure they have work which challenges them.
- Supported by the primary school physical education and sport funding, pupils improve their balance, agility and co-ordination skills and this contributes to their physical fitness.
- Therapy contributes to pupils' progress. Because pupils are supported with sleep and feeding programmes at home, they are ready to learn when back in school.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The teacher is relatively new in post and is taking decisive action to improve provision. On entry children make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and understood by staff. Consequently, support to enable the children to succeed is put in place immediately. Staff work well with parents, but this is an area where the early years lead intends to develop further to increase parental involvement into its assessment procedures.
- Children behave well. They have a very good attitude to learning and to each other and staff. This is as a result of high expectations by staff and very effective behaviour management techniques. Staff work well to ensure that children are kept safe.
- Teaching and assessment are good. There is an effective balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by children that encourage children to investigate and think. For example, children during the inspection constructed 'rainbow fish' from various tactile resources which gave them opportunities to explore different materials and try out different ideas.
- Children make good progress. A wide range of assessment techniques contribute to their progress. Children make good progress in letter and number shapes through a wide range of both indoor and outdoor activities that are interesting and well resourced.

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

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| Unique reference number | 139911 |
| Local authority | Coventry |
| Inspection number | 450242 |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy alternative provision sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 90 |
| Appropriate authority | Interim executive board |
| Chair | Chris Nield |
| Headteacher | Rob Jones |
| Headteacher (Executive) | Andrew Moran |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 024 7659 4952 |
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