

Wolverdene Special School

22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2AF

Inspection dates

9–10 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is a highly dedicated, committed and determined leader. His infectious passion for learning ensures that all staff are extremely knowledgeable and proficient contributors to the school's success. As a result, pupils make substantial progress across the curriculum and against their personal targets.
- There is a very strong emphasis on improving pupils' behaviour and advancing their personal, social and emotional development. This enables them to make great gains in all aspects of learning.
- Extremely effective programmes of support underpin the school's work. Pupils receive personalised support and therapies that ensure they make excellent progress against their individual targets.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The family support workers foster highly positive relationships with parents and work closely with them to actively promote pupils' welfare.
- Governors strive to build their knowledge and understanding of the school. This enables them to provide very effective challenge and support to leaders, ensuring that the school has improved since the last inspection.
- Teachers and support staff build trusting relationships with pupils and take time to get to know them. They use this information very well to provide effective challenge and support that ensures pupils of all abilities make considerable progress.
- Staff have very secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They use this to great effect so that pupils achieve well across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is interesting and wide-ranging. Topics and special events stimulate curiosity and ensure that pupils want to learn.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is very well promoted through the curriculum and day-to-day interactions. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The system to manage pupils' behaviour is highly effective. Staff consistently apply the rules, and reward pupils' efforts to make the right choices. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves considerably over time.
- Leaders have made changes to the curriculum to provide pupils with even more opportunities to write. However, this is not yet consistent across all classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue with work to provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to write for a range of reasons across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is a highly respected and greatly influential leader. His passion for learning and dedication to the pupils in his care is evident in all aspects of the school's work. He rightly recognises that pupils have one chance for their education and he makes no secret that he expects Wolverdene to be their best chance. Therefore, he is extremely ambitious for pupils and staff so a culture of continuous improvement prevails.
- There is a clear system of ongoing review and refinements that has ensured that provision is outstanding. The headteacher uses his deep knowledge of education and best practice to make carefully selected changes to the school. He checks the impact of these adaptations closely, rejecting any that do not meet his very high expectations. He often seeks new ways of doing things so as to have a positive impact on pupils. For example, he worked closely with the local authority to refine the admissions process so that pupils are able to join the school sooner and benefit more from its wide-ranging support.
- The new deputy headteacher has quickly acquired a secure knowledge of the school. She recognises that staff development is at the heart of the school's work and key to success. Already, she is working closely with staff to improve teaching and learning further. Over time, staff have received highly effective support, challenge, training and feedback that have increased their proficiency and enabled pupils to make excellent progress.
- The very effective personal development of pupils is integral to the school's approach. Every interaction is seen as an opportunity to reinforce pupils' confidence, social skills and appreciation of learning. Leaders know that pupils need to be ready to learn. Therefore, the head of care and the inclusion team work together with all staff to ensure that pupils have the necessary help and emotional support to participate in lessons and be successful. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves considerably over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, make similar or better progress than their classmates. The pupil premium funding is spent wisely. Using their detailed knowledge of individuals, leaders have identified precisely the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities benefit from tailored teaching and personal development that leaders monitor closely to ensure that it improves their achievement.
- Middle leaders know their subjects well. They have benefited from training that has enabled them to identify and make the right changes to the curriculum. For example, the mathematics leader has ensured that pupils have more opportunities to solve problems and use resources so that they make substantial progress in the subject.
- The curriculum is wide-ranging and interesting for pupils. Topics such as 'Space' and 'Around the world in 30 days' make meaningful links across subjects and enthuse pupils to carry out some research of their own for homework. Inspirational props such as the authentic Thai canoe capture pupils' imagination and interest in pirates. The

'Friday enrichment' programme includes extra-curricular activities such as art, outdoor learning, skittles and sports coaching. The broad curriculum enables pupils to make excellent progress across the range of subjects.

- There are many opportunities within and beyond the curriculum for pupils to learn how to stay safe, to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to actively promote British values. This helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain very well. For example, in a recent assembly, pupils learnt about Guy Fawkes and the role he played in the 'gunpowder plot'. Through this, leaders explored issues such as terrorism, democracy, mutual respect and tolerance, the rule of law and personal safety. It also reinforced the important school rule of 'being in the right place at the right time'.
- The sport premium is used very well to extend pupils' physical education. Pupils value the wider range of sports that are on offer, such as kayaking. The funding has also supported teachers to develop their teaching of gymnastics.
- The local authority provides much valued support to leaders and governors. The learning and leadership partner knows the school very well and welcomes new ideas, providing robust challenge and support as appropriate. This flexible and bold approach has facilitated ongoing developments at the school.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They value its work, especially the way that it has enabled their children to succeed socially and in education. One parent said, 'I don't know where my son would be without this school. It gives him a sense of belonging.'

Governance

- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. This is because they receive detailed information from leaders and seek out appropriate training. For example, governors recently learned about the therapeutic counselling used in school. Governors make very effective use of their knowledge to challenge and support leaders to improve the school further.
- The governing body has recently carried out an audit of governors' skills. Governors seek to ensure that they are equipped to hold leaders to account and maintain careful oversight of their responsibilities. For example, the health and safety governor routinely checks that the school site is maintained to a high standard and that risk assessments are sufficiently thorough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding is interwoven across all aspects of the school's work. Even before pupils are admitted into the school, the family support workers establish relationships with parents that enable them to provide the right kind of help at the right time. Throughout their time at school, staff keep a close eye on pupils and take all necessary steps to promote their welfare.
- There are high-quality records that are detailed and thorough. They show that staff challenge other professionals with great rigour where necessary. Governors and leaders systematically check that arrangements for safeguarding, including recruitment processes, meet requirements and are fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching enables pupils to make substantial progress, both academically and personally.
- Teachers and learning support assistants know pupils extremely well. They take the time to build strong relationships with pupils so that they can provide just the right amount of help. During lessons, staff direct their support carefully at individual pupils and motivate them to complete work and manage their own behaviour. As a result, pupils show excellent attitudes in class and poor behaviour very rarely interrupts learning.
- Staff use assessment very well to enable all pupils to make excellent progress. Pupils' books show that tasks are matched carefully to their individual needs. Teachers also check pupils' learning during lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a teacher asked pupils to practise a subtraction method before she set tasks. As they carried out the calculation, she checked that pupils understood the method and used this to identify pupils who needed more support.
- The most able pupils make sustained progress across the curriculum. Tasks for these pupils are suitably demanding and teachers provide very effective challenge to promote pupils' thinking. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a pupil was asked to use dice to make a calculation that provided a three-digit answer. The pupil sought to make the biggest total he could and that led him to a four-digit number. Gently, the teacher asked, 'Does that make a three-digit number? How can you adjust the calculation?' The pupil set about correcting his work.
- Pupils enjoy lessons that challenge their thinking and enable them to make excellent progress across the curriculum. In the current topic, 'Around the world in 30 days', Year 4 pupils have been learning about time zones. Year 6 pupils understood the complex topic of how different parts of the brain affect decision-making because the teacher explained it very well. The teacher taught pupils to use their hand to recall parts of the brain, such as the palm being the reptilian brain. The teacher explained how the reptilian brain provokes the instinctive reactions of fight or flight and used the term 'neuro-plasticity' to show that we can learn to control ourselves and change our behaviour.
- Staff have a strong knowledge of the subjects that they teach. In phonics lessons, staff support pupils to say sounds correctly and build words using their fingers. They then help pupils to use these sounds in their writing. As a result of teachers' phonics knowledge, pupils make substantial progress in reading and writing. Nevertheless, leaders have rightly recognised that pupils' attainment in writing could be increased even further. Last year, they set about developing the curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to write across other subjects and for a range of reasons. This work is not yet consistent across all classes.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils benefit from far-reaching and highly effective personal support that greatly improves their behaviour and ability to access learning. There are a wide range of interventions and therapies available that are proven to make a difference to pupils' outcomes. Staff select pupils carefully so that they receive the right support such as nurture group or dance therapy. Pupils note the impact of this extra help. One pupil currently in nurture group said, 'This school really makes a difference.'
- Across the school, pupils' social development is strongly promoted. In the boarding house, 'The Lodge', pupils sat around a large table with staff to share a breakfast and polite conversation. Pupils of all ages demonstrate that they can work well together, take turns and care for each other because staff constantly reinforce this aspect of learning.
- Bullying is very rare. Pupils know that bullying is when someone is unkind or hurts them repeatedly. They are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem with another pupil. One pupil wisely noted, 'It doesn't always go well if we try and resolve it ourselves.'
- Discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils learn to respect and appreciate others' differences through assemblies, circle times and topic work that explores a variety of backgrounds.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff apply the school's approach for behaviour management very consistently. This is because the headteacher is adamant that there will be 'no freestyling here!' Pupils understand that points and merits enable them to receive meaningful rewards, such as choosing their 'Friday enrichment' activity or visiting the merit shop to purchase some toys such as 'slime'. Through the rewards system, pupils learn what successful behaviour is and are motivated to achieve this so that their behaviour improves greatly.
- There are very well-established routines that strongly promote good behaviour. For example, pupils come into the hall as soon as they arrive at school, and sit quietly eating toast with their classmates and trusted adults. After break, pupils calm down with snack time and enjoy apples and a story.
- The headteacher has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. He feels that school is the best place for pupils to learn about their mistakes and put them right. Records show that this is the case and that serious incidents of poor behaviour reduce over time. As a result, there have been no exclusions in the past two years.

- Pupils' attendance has been above the national average for special schools for the last two years. Currently, pupils' attendance is in line with the national average for primary schools. Leaders expect pupils to attend school very well and have taken innovative steps such as organising health clinics on the school site to reduce absence rates significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make substantial progress across the curriculum because teaching closely matches their individual needs, and expectations of what they can achieve are high.
- When pupils join the school at different times during key stage 2, they have often experienced significant gaps in their education and present with highly negative attitudes to learning. Over time, pupils' rates of progress increase so that those who have been in school the longest make exceptional progress. No time is wasted to transform pupils' attitudes, and teaching straightaway addresses gaps in their learning very precisely. Once this work is complete, teachers challenge pupils further.
- Pupils make excellent progress against their individual targets because they benefit from high-quality therapies and interventions that are reinforced in the classroom. All staff know what to do to support pupils to reach these personal goals. Pupils' behaviour improves substantially as a result of this work.
- The most able pupils make significant progress across the curriculum. Pupils' exercise books show that tasks are interesting and demanding for these pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar or better progress than their classmates. Leaders ensure that they receive additional support that is matched closely to their individual needs. This ensures that the most able disadvantaged pupils achieve very well too.
- Girls are a relatively new addition to the school. The first girls were admitted two years ago. As a small and relatively new group, leaders have set about ensuring that they receive tailored provision such as the 'girls' group'. Consequently, girls achieve as well as boys.
- Last year, at the end of key stage 2, fewer pupils met the expected standard in writing than in reading or mathematics. However, the school's information about pupils' progress shows that pupils make similarly substantial progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their varied starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	116635
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10003558

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	6–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Laura Bell
Headteacher	Paul Van Walwyk
Telephone number	01264 362 350
Website	www.wolverdene.hants.sch.uk
Email address	adminoffice@wolverdene.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2012

Information about this school

- Wolverdene is a special school that provides places for 50 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school has a residential unit, 'The Lodge', that provides 10 weekly residential places for boys.
- All of the pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Pupils join the school at different times. Some have been excluded from other schools and all have had a disrupted education.
- Most of the pupils are boys. Girls were first admitted to the school two years ago.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British and others come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. This group represents over half of pupils in the school.

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their exercise books. The majority of observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, support staff, a group of pupils, one member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to four parents on the telephone and took into account seven responses, including written comments, to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also considered three responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents were looked at including the school's information about pupils' achievement and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Boyd

Ofsted Inspector

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