

Blossom House School

Station Road, Motspur Park, New Malden, London KT3 6JJ

Inspection dates

6–8 December 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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has sustained the school's outstanding provision since the previous inspection. All the independent school standards are met in full.
- The headteacher is an exceptional leader and team builder. Multidisciplinary teams perform exceptionally well together. They share the headteacher's drive and determination to provide the very best for all pupils. Staff morale is high.
- Educationalists and therapists design holistic, tailored teaching and learning programmes. As a result, pupils make rapid and sustained improvements in their learning and progress, personal development and behaviour.
- Many pupils have complex emotional and social difficulties. The school provides them with security, a sense of belonging and a will to succeed. Significant barriers to learning are removed.
- Pupils are kept safe and secure. Staff are vigilant and quickly pick up on any potential difficulties. Policies, procedures and partnerships are of the highest quality.
- The early years foundation stage and the post-16 provision replicate the outstanding provision in the main school. Outstanding leadership ensures outstanding outcomes for all children and learners.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to provide pupils with work which makes them think hard about their learning, including providing further academic courses for those learners who are able to undertake them in the sixth form.
- Share outstanding practice with other schools, so that more pupils benefit from this excellent provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has made sure that outstanding teaching, learning and pupils' progress, together with a highly inclusive curriculum, have been maintained since the previous inspection. She has secured further significant improvements. These include a purpose-built school and additional new premises for some of the younger children, which are fully accessible. Facilities include a gymnasium, a food technology room, science laboratories and IT (information and technology) facilities. The school continues to meet all the independent school standards.
- The headteacher has bolstered leadership capacity at all levels. Senior and middle leaders have been specifically appointed because they have either experience in education and/or therapeutic strategies, as well as a proven track record of success. As a result, there have been strong improvements in pupils' behaviour, and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Additionally, the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage has improved significantly.
- At the forefront of every decision and subsequent action is a determined and concerted effort to make sure that the very often complex and diverse needs of all pupils are fully met. There is a demonstrable and united belief from all leaders that, with the right type of support and training, everyone can achieve their full potential. This provides a clear mandate for success.
- Every pupil makes exceptional progress, irrespective of background, gender, ethnicity and learning difficulty. Pupils develop the prerequisite skills to become independent, respectful and mature young people, ready for the next stage of their learning and for life.
- The leadership of teaching and learning has been strengthened considerably. A team of teaching and learning leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and provide staff with evaluative feedback on what they need to work on next. They check to see if staff have acted upon their advice.
- A relatively new team of middle leaders complements these new positions. This provides coaching and mentoring for colleagues who can voluntarily opt into support programmes. Line managers use their expertise to refer any teacher or other member of staff who requires help. Guidance and support is also provided for those teachers new to the profession and to teachers who are on the teacher training alliance programme. While the school works with a number of other schools, it has yet to share its outstanding practice on a regular basis.
- Professional development and training are given a high priority. There is a clear cycle of staff appraisal to make sure that everyone is able to deliver high-quality programmes of learning and therapy.
- Monitoring has been enhanced further through the appointment of a data analyst manager. All monitoring information, including pupils' progress information, is analysed incisively. Any pupil in danger of underachieving is swiftly identified with additional support put in place.

- Pupils learn a broad range of subjects, and follow a modified national curriculum. This provides a framework for highly individualised learning programmes, also reflecting pupils' statutory rights as outlined in their individual education plans. There are numerous extra-curricular activities including playing an instrument and singing in the choir, as well as a wide range of visits and visitors.
- The inclusive ethos of the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Likewise, the curriculum supports pupils' understanding of British values and citizenship effectively. Many activities promote pupils' understanding of democracy and the rule of law. For example, pupils vote weekly on topical issues, including whether it is wise for celebrities to be involved in politics. School councillors are elected through a voting system. Pupils learn about differences between people, including other faiths and religions. Older pupils visit Paris and Barcelona to experience first-hand different cultures, as well as learning key life skills when undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policy has been updated and covers all current statutory guidance. It is available to parents on request and is also published on the school's website.
- Safeguarding and pupils' welfare are the highest priorities for all staff. Policies, procedures and practice are led by the primary designated safeguarding lead who is also the family liaison coordinator. She is supported by a further five designated safeguarding leads. Staff insight and knowledge of every family and their children's needs, coupled with the close liaison between educational and therapeutic teams, means that all pupils are kept safe and secure. The lead safeguarding officer oversees all tiers of support with the welfare team and therapists. Help is tailored to meet the needs of families and their children. They range from sign-posting parents to mentoring schemes and respite, to workshops to raise their awareness of domestic violence, and preventing extremism and radicalisation. Any child protection concerns are recorded and reported to the appropriate agencies. Indeed, the school is tenacious in making sure that pupils are protected and will re-refer if and when necessary to the local authority. All the required checks are undertaken to make sure adults are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Each class encompasses an exceptionally wide variation of abilities, needs and learning difficulties. Some pupils may have good functional language but low levels of comprehension, while other pupils are virtually non-verbal. Through highly effective collaborative work between the education teams and therapists, staff plan targeted and individualised learning programmes to make sure that activities are pitched effectively to meet pupils' needs and levels of understanding.
- Learning is sequential because skills are taught progressively. Adults provide a visual timetable and reiterate frequently what pupils' next steps are in their learning. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of what they are to learn and how well they have achieved. They feel confident and reassured, thereby reducing anxiety levels

successfully. Staff systematically revisit these steps and check with pupils to assess whether they have achieved them. As a result, learning proceeds at a fast pace. Nonetheless, very occasionally, activities are too easy for some pupils because they already understand what they have been asked to do. Adults do not always revise the activities to make sure pupils' learning is challenging enough.

- Pupils' speech and language, and communication skills are constantly developed and reinforced. Adults seize on every opportunity to develop these skills. Older pupils are taught the appropriateness of language in different contexts. This gives pupils confidence to express their views and opinions in a variety of situations. Pupils also become more aware of their strengths and to use this knowledge to help them to make good career choices.
- Parents told inspectors that they know that their children are growing in confidence on a daily basis, because staff understand their children so well.
- Pupils' progress and behaviour are carefully monitored in lessons. Activities are quickly adapted to sustain pupils' attention and engagement in their learning. Pupils' ability to become resilient learners grows perceptibly in lessons.
- The behaviour management of pupils is exemplary, and ensures that pupils learn and develop with little distraction. All adults consistently implement the behaviour policy. The exceptionally strong relationships between pupils and adults, together with very small groups and one-to-one working, enable pupils to flourish and achieve well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Thorough assessments before pupils start school mean that leaders are able to build up a comprehensive profile of individual needs – academic, emotional and social. Many pupils have exceptionally fragile self-worth for a multitude of different and interwoven reasons before they start school. This often includes mental health issues which have often impeded pupils' ability to cope with school and life in general.
- Multidisciplinary teams with support from the family liaison coordinator implement a range of intensive strategies to develop pupils' ability to learn effectively, to interact appropriately, and to begin developing a more positive self-image. Staff are skilled in spotting pupils' potential talent or interest, and direct them to activities where they are guaranteed to flourish. As a result, rapid gains are made in pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are helped to develop insight into their own capabilities, which has a significant impact on their progress. Pupils told inspectors that the school is excellent. They explained that staff listen to them, they understand their problems, and even more importantly they do something about them. They said that the headteacher is 'amazing'. They are extremely proud of the school, believe in their own abilities and are keen to achieve even more.

- Any possible barriers to pupils' learning and welfare are identified and resolved. Potentially vulnerable families and their children are given timely and much needed advice and support. The family liaison coordinator ensures that a myriad of interventions are well coordinated and targeted effectively. Through their discussions with inspectors and through the inspection survey, parents confirmed that they feel fully involved in their children's education, and exceptionally well supported.
- Outstanding teamwork and close monitoring of pupils' behaviour means that staff have a comprehensive overview of every pupil. They are on high alert to any nuances or differences in pupils' behaviour. They quickly identify, defuse and prevent any intimidating behaviour which has the potential to escalate into challenging behaviour or potential bullying. In almost every activity, adults emphasise respect for others, which enables pupils to develop a good awareness of the needs and rights of others.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and to recognise potential dangers, including when using the internet. Activities and assemblies raise pupils' awareness of different forms of bullying. Older pupils have an appropriate understanding of issues such as relationships and drugs. Pupils said that they feel very safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- As soon as children and other pupils start school, staff constantly encourage them to understand the impact that their behaviour has on others, to appreciate others' feelings, so that they can regulate their own behaviour.
- Staff model high expectations for behaviour and good manners. They reinforce good learning and behaviour through instant verbal praise and stars. As a consequence, the school is calm and orderly. Pupils move around the school quietly, and work hard in their small groups.
- Pupils' behaviour is also closely monitored and recorded electronically. Pupils' emotional and social progress is assessed, with specific therapies put in place if there are concerns. Staff and leaders are also able to identify any patterns and triggers for the most challenging behaviours and implement intensive therapeutic support for those pupils who need it. Pupils are also encouraged to recognise for themselves when they are not coping in lessons and breaktimes. They voluntarily choose to sit on a chair outside the class to reflect on their behaviour or in a calm room.
- Case studies confirm that the school's work has a profound and positive impact on modifying the most extreme and challenging behaviours and attitudes of a minority of pupils. Some of the older pupils met with inspectors, displaying remarkable self-assurance and maturity. They talked with pride about their achievements and progress. They relish the responsibilities they are given because they say staff can now trust them.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make rapid progress in all subjects – from often very low starting points – as a result of tailored programmes that precisely meet pupils’ individual needs, abilities and interests.
- Pupils in all key stages are set challenging targets in English and mathematics as well as functional targets, speech and language and social targets. The school’s information confirms that almost all pupils make strong progress in these key areas. As a result, almost all pupils meet their challenging targets.
- Communication aids such as pictures, symbols, signing, and the use of written and spoken English are used to great effect. They support pupils’ learning exceptionally well, promoting their confidence, independence and ability to communicate with increasing fluency and accuracy.
- Older pupils make good and often rapid progress across key stages 3 and 4. They study a wide range of qualifications which are carefully matched to their academic and personal needs. As a result, in 2016 almost all pupils gained a range of qualifications at GCSE grades A to G, including in English and mathematics.
- The increasing number of pupils with complex learning needs and/or those with a diagnosis of autism also make outstanding progress. As with other pupils, they benefit from the holistic approach of a multidisciplinary team who fine-tune provision expertly to meet their needs.
- There are regular and accurate checks on pupils’ progress which means that learning is sequential and in small steps. Overlearning concepts and skills consolidates pupils’ learning and progress well.
- Reading is taught effectively. The teaching of phonics provides pupils with the foundations to read and write words with increasing accuracy. Those pupils who read to inspectors were fluent and confident readers. Pupils told inspectors that they love reading and that they appreciate the help they get from adults. Younger pupils have excellent support to read using symbols and signing.
- Less-able pupils use symbols to help them read text and, where appropriate, use sign language to read simple phrases. Adults are adept at making sure that every opportunity is used to reinforce pupils’ reading skills across all subjects.
- Pupils’ mathematical skills are developed well. They are encouraged to use and apply their understanding effectively. For example, pupils practise their gross motor skills, jumping on a number line. They simultaneously develop one-to-one correspondence and learn to identify numbers. Adults skilfully extend number recognition for those pupils who can identify numbers beyond 10.
- There are no differences between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and their peers. They too make rapid progress in all key areas.
- Those pupils who are high-functioning in specific areas of learning also make good and often better progress because of the individualised approach to teaching, learning and assessment. However, they are not always encouraged to think hard about their learning.

- The new integrated approach to teaching subjects through topics means that pupils' learning is enriched in all areas. Progress is rapid and sustained in all subjects, including vocational subjects and especially so in art and other creative subjects. Older pupils receive independent careers advice and work-related modules, including mock interviews and how to write their curriculum vitae.
- As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment. In 2016, every pupil went on to either further education or training. The post-16 provision has expanded rapidly over the last two years. This is mainly in response to high levels of parental satisfaction with the school, as reflected in the questionnaires and discussions with inspectors.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years section is a specialist provision for children with speech, language and communication difficulties. Year 1 pupils also attend this provision, providing them with further time to make a positive transition to key stages 1 and 2.
- The early years leader has an excellent understanding of what constitutes effective practice. She leads by example and promotes excellent team work. There is good professional development and training for all staff, including in sign language.
- Children are assessed when they enter the early years. Activities reflect the children's individual education plans. These are reviewed every half term to make sure that they continue to meet children's needs and to identify their next steps. Those children who are not achieving as they should have catch-up sessions to boost their progress.
- There is an integrated approach to teaching and learning. Children have intensive speech and language therapy, from the speech and language therapist, in groups and individually when required. Occupational therapy sessions complement this work. As a result, from exceptionally low starting points, children grow in confidence and are keen to explore the world around them.
- Children learn in very small groups or on a one-to-one basis. This enables adults to assess children's progress accurately. Teams are led by a teacher, a speech and language therapist, and a classroom assistant. Much of the teaching is multi-sensory to ensure that all children can access learning well.
- There is an excellent focus on developing children's ability to turn take and to cooperate with others. Children are eager to respond to the routines of the school and settle in quickly.
- The outdoor areas provide children with additional areas to develop in all areas, including their physical development. Children are able to choose from a range of activities on a daily basis.
- Parents are full partners in their children's learning, having regular updates, curriculum plans and themes and being invited to a multitude of different events. This includes termly sessions to support parents with their children's speech and language and behaviour at home.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- Leaders have high expectations. They systematically monitor all aspects of provision in order to drive up learners' achievement and promote their personal development.
- Learners have excellent opportunities to continue with their education. Many retake their GCSEs and all attend college on a part-time basis to undertake a work skills qualification.
- In 2016, almost all learners achieved their academic, functional, social, speech and language targets. This represents outstanding achievement given their starting points. Learners' progress is effectively checked and reviewed. Any learner at risk of falling behind has intensive support. As a result, learners continue to achieve their full potential in this key phase.
- Over the last four years, all learners have successfully accessed places in education, employment or training, including apprenticeships.
- Currently, there are very few academic pathways because only a small minority of learners are able to access these courses and qualifications. However, as this provision expands so do the needs and aptitudes of learners.
- There is excellent continuity in practice from key stage 4, with taught modules in English, mathematics, as well as employability skills. Learners continue to have personalised educational programmes and therapies in response to their needs and their educational statement or education, health and care plan.
- The close focus on developing learners' independent skills continues. Teaching assistants are used to secure learners' safety. They initially accompany learners to their part-time college course. Once confident, learners attend independently but stay in touch via texting with their college assistant to let them know that all is well. Learners develop into confident and respectful young people.
- Impartial careers advice and guidance is well organised and successful. It is linked effectively to personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and to activities which promote learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Enterprise skills are developed through community and charity events. Learners have many opportunities to take part in sports activities with other learners from different settings, thus developing their communication skills and confidence.

School details

Unique reference number	102694
DfE registration number	315/6076
Inspection number	10006008

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	27
Number of part-time pupils	10
Proprietor	Blossom House School Limited
Headteacher	Joanna Burgess
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,850–£41,850
Telephone number	020 89467348
Website	www.blossomhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@blossomhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2012

Information about this school

- Blossom House School is a specialist independent day school which provides education for pupils aged from three to 19 years. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. All pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties, as well as often complex and diverse additional learning difficulties.
- The school opened in 1993. The school's last standard inspection was in March 2012, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding and all the independent

school standards were met.

- Since that inspection the school has relocated to two new and separate sites. Both the Euston and Motspur Park sites have early years provision for children aged between three and five years. Year 1 pupils also attend this provision. The Euston site is a much smaller setting for pupils up to eight years of age. Currently, 12 pupils attend this provision. The Motspur Park setting is much larger and is situated in the borough of Merton. It provides education for pupils aged from three to 19 years, including a post-16 provision. At the time of this inspection, there were 59 primary-aged pupils, 104 secondary-aged pupils and 27 post-16 learners.
- Post-16 learners attend school for two and half days. For the remainder of the school week learners attend alternative provision at three further education colleges. These are NESCOL, South Thames and Kingston Art College.
- Pupils are placed by 24 London boroughs and almost all have their places funded by their local authority.
- The school aims to 'provide a communication centred environment where children with a range of speech, language and communication difficulties are supported in all areas of their learning'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited almost every class in a series of short observations of lessons on both sites.
- During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning. Inspectors heard pupils of different abilities read, including the most able and those who find reading difficult.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, middle leaders, therapists, teachers, parents and pupils. A telephone discussion was also held with an external partner supporting the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils during lunchtimes and breaks, and on arrival and departure from school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 81 responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, and spoke to a range of parents through informal discussions.
- Inspectors took account of 116 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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