

The Collett School

Lockers Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TQ

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have maintained the good quality of education for pupils since the previous inspection.
- Pupils settle quickly and well. Staff know and understand their individual special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Pastoral care for all ages is outstanding.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. This results in lessons that run smoothly so pupils can learn and progress well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have meaningful opportunities for work placements. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education or work.
- Leaders have established effective links with businesses and other external providers. The school has a good reputation in the community.
- All pupils who left the school in July 2018 went on to further education or work after gaining suitable qualifications. This is the norm.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. This is because staff work hard to meet their needs. Pupils are happy and want to achieve well.
- Pupils make good and often better progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics.
- The youngest children settle quickly and well into the routines of school. Adults provide precisely for their needs.
- Most parents are very happy with the work of the school. They appreciate the pastoral care their children receive.
- Staff do not use the information from pupils' education, health and care plans (EHCP) as well as they could. The work to link their targets to the learning provided in class is new.
- The head of school is currently reviewing the curriculum. It does not show progression opportunities as clearly as it could.
- The quality of governance has not been as effective as it could have been over this year. Governors are no longer holding school leaders well enough to account for improving the quality of education.
- The approach to the teaching of reading is not strategic enough and there are too many approaches used. Leadership of this aspect is new. Plans are underway to change this aspect of the school's provision.
- A significant minority of both parents and staff have mixed views about the effectiveness of leadership. They consider that leaders do not respond quickly enough to concerns they raise.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - taking better steps to improve communication with parents who find it difficult to raise concerns, so they have faith in the leadership team
 - ensuring all staff share leaders' and governors' vision for improvement and are clear about their part in school improvement
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing a cohesive and systematic approach to the teaching of reading
 - ensuring that the curriculum is well planned so that there is clear progression which supports pupils' learning
 - making better use of pupils' EHCP targets and assessment information to provide more effective learning opportunities

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the quality of education is good. Leaders and staff have created an environment that is nurturing and provides pupils, all of whom have an EHCP, with equal opportunities to achieve well.
- The executive headteacher and senior leaders communicate a strong passion and desire for pupils to succeed. They know their school's strengths and areas for development. Their analysis of the effectiveness of the school is thorough.
- School leaders work effectively with other special schools and mainstream schools to promote best practice in teaching and learning. Also, leaders have built strong community links with businesses and other providers. This has resulted in raising significant funds to supplement the provision for pupils.
- Since the short inspection in January 2018, the school's structure for middle leadership has changed. New leaders are enthusiastic and skilled, developing collaborative working that is proving successful. They have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but it is too early to see the impact of their work on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through lessons and assemblies, pupils take on additional responsibilities such as setting up the hall. They gain in confidence and self-esteem as a result. Adults provide pupils with many opportunities to overcome anxiety, either through soft music in the background at lunchtimes for example, or through additional opportunities such as art therapy. Pupils have many opportunities to learn and care for the animals kept at school, which they enjoy.
- Leaders make good use of additional funding such as the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up funding and the sport premium. Those pupils who benefit from extra provision reap the rewards of this effective support and make good progress.
- Teachers use the school's assessment system diligently to see how well pupils are doing in a number of subjects. They consider the progress pupils are making from their clear starting points. Consequently, pupils make strong progress and leaders ensure that they intervene quickly if a pupil starts to fall behind.
- Even so, leaders do not have a strategic approach to the teaching of reading. This results in teachers using a number of approaches which brings inconsistency to the quality of teaching of reading. Leaders are aware that this is not the best practice, and they are reviewing their approach so adults can consistently set work at the correct level and provide challenge for pupils in their classes.
- The views of parents are mixed. The large majority are delighted with the work of the school, particularly the welcome from staff and the pastoral care given to their children. A significant minority however have become frustrated with what they perceive as a lack of response from governors and leaders to concerns that have been taken to the school.

- Equally the views of staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire were mixed. Many staff are proud to work at The Collett School and consider that they are well supported by school leaders. However, this is not the case for all. Several staff commented that they consider that new leadership has not been as supportive as in the past. A number of staff commented that they do not understand the decisions leaders make or the value in them.

Governance

- Although the quality of governance has been effective since the previous inspection, since January 2018 its effectiveness has diminished. This is due to falling numbers on the governing body and the skills of governors. The few governors that remain have too many roles and responsibilities. This has reduced the capacity for governance to continue to hold leaders effectively to account.
- Governors question leaders about the use of additional funds, such as the pupil premium for example, but accept the responses provided too readily. They are too accepting of the positive information provided by the school.
- Governors have not ensured that the statutory information on the school website is kept up to date.
- The governing body does not have a sufficient understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school is due to join with another local special school in January 2019 as a part of a federation. A new governing body is currently being established to be part of the leadership and management of both schools. A review of governance has been recommended to ensure that the new governing body is strong and effective from the start, and to stem any further decline of current governance.
- Governors are committed to the work of the school. From the minutes of meetings, they check how well pupils are achieving both personally and academically.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory duties are carried out to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- School leaders carry out the necessary and appropriate employment checks on the suitability of all staff working in school.
- Nearly all parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agreed that their children are kept safe at school. All staff and pupils spoken with agree that there is a strong and continuous focus on keeping safe, and pupils say they feel safe.
- Staff receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training and updates. Adults in school are alert to any signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk or vulnerable. Staff report concerns and follow the school's processes and procedures diligently. Those with leadership responsibility follow through concerns to an outcome that benefits individual pupils. They work in a timely way with other agencies when necessary. All records are well kept and confirm that leaders carry out their work effectively.
- Leaders ensure that risks are identified and produce appropriate assessments to reduce them. At times, leaders can be overly positive. Risks are not reviewed sufficiently well

for the changing needs or circumstances of pupils, for example when students return to the school on an alternative placement one day a week.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Throughout the school, adults and pupils have highly positive relationships which ensure that pupils are settled and respond very well to teachers and teaching assistants. For some pupils, teachers restore their faith in education. These pupils especially make outstanding progress.
- Teachers plan learning that covers basic skills and supports pupils' learning in number and literacy. They have high expectations of presentation which results in most pupils showing pride in their work.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good, as is their understanding of the wide range of SEN within their classes. This knowledge and understanding are used to good effect to help pupils settle in class and learn.
- In key stage 4, staff are skilled in ensuring that pupils make the best possible progress they can. Adults prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education or employment. Where possible, pupils sit GCSEs or functional skills qualifications so that they gain useful and relevant qualifications to go on to college or into work.
- Children who start in the Reception year or who are part of the early years class settle exceptionally well. They are helped to understand the routines and have very positive relationships with the adults. Staff are diligent in using the EHCP plans to inform their plans for children's learning and recording small steps of progress. Children receive highly individualised learning opportunities to develop their language and communication and make at least good progress as a result.
- Pupils enjoy subjects such as cookery where they learn to produce nutritious meals from ingredients they would easily find at home. Adults support pupils with assessing risks and keeping themselves safe while using hot appliances. Pupils make good progress in learning how to take care of themselves.
- The impact of additional staff on improving pupils' progress is more mixed. In many classes, these additional adults support the learning effectively, for example in key stage 4. They are highly skilled in helping pupils to develop communication skills during lessons. However, at times, support staff either help too much or not enough. As a result, the provision for pupils, especially in the lower school, is not targeted as precisely as it could be.
- Currently, teachers plan learning activities across a range of subjects that fit with the national curriculum and the school's assessment system. This is under review because leaders have identified that the curriculum is not as well targeted or as progressive as it could be to meet pupils' individual needs. As the new curriculum is in the early stages, it is not possible to judge the impact of this work.
- Similarly, teachers' effective use of pupils' EHCPs is also in its early stages and has not yet had sufficient impact on increasing the progress pupils make.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding
- Pupils are clearly happy, self-confident and growing in self-esteem. They are proud of their school and have highly effective relationships with adults. One pupil told inspectors, 'This is a good school. The teachers are nice. They listen to us and help us.'
- Pupils spoken with over the course of the inspection say they feel safe. Those pupils who have significant communication needs willingly follow adults' instructions and requests. They present as safe and secure.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. They have an age-appropriate understanding of keeping safe when using a range of online technologies. One pupil proudly commented, 'We do not tolerate bullying in this school.' Leaders' records of incidents show that concerns are dealt with appropriately.
- Pupils' personal development is highly effective. They speak easily and well about caring for the school's animals, which helps them to develop a sense of understanding for others and responsibility. Equally, through participating in the school council, many are gaining valuable skills in presenting their ideas and participating in meetings where there may be a difference of views and opinions.
- Many parents are highly positive about the work of the school. They comment about the exceptional work of staff who have restored their children's enjoyment of learning. One parent echoed the sentiment of many: 'My child has shown significant development in his personal development. Through this his confidence has grown, which has opened up new opportunities for him to improve his learning.'
- Through the school's work in The Hive, pupils gain a secure understanding of positive mental health and strategies to help them with their sensory needs. Some pupils have the opportunity to participate in a range of therapies, such as art, to help them with any anxiety issues they face. The adults are skilful at supporting pupils who have these needs identified in their EHCP.
- Pupils experience a wide range of external speakers to enhance their personal development and understanding of the world. During the inspection, paramedics were on site explaining how to perform crucial life-saving techniques. Pupils asked highly pertinent questions, demonstrating their enthusiasm for the topic.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Many have come to the school having not had their special needs well catered for previously. Pupils quickly settle into school life and willingly follow the school's high expectations for behaviour. Pupils who previously have been excluded from other schools before attending The Collett School behave exceptionally well and make good progress.
- Staff have successfully created a highly positive and calm environment in which pupils can learn and regulate their own behaviour. Pupils, the majority of whom who have

autism spectrum disorder, have useful strategies that they use to help when feeling anxious. Teachers and teaching assistants deal with any incidents of poor behaviour sensitively and effectively.

- The youngest children in the early years class are provided with a stimulating environment that meets their needs and abilities. The most able children in this class are provided with additional learning opportunities to develop their phonics and reading skills.
- Pupils attend school punctually and regularly. Year on year, pupils' overall attendance has been consistently in line with the national average. The attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged is similar when compared with that of others. Persistent absenteeism is low. Many parents comment that their children, 'Have changed beyond recognition, settled and want to go to school.'
- During less structured times, such as breaktime and lunchtime, pupils are suitably supervised. Routines are well set, so that pupils feel safe and secure. Calming music is used effectively in the dining hall during lunchtime and pupils are well supported so they continue their personal development and good behaviour during this time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their individual starting points, pupils make good or sometimes better progress in both their personal development and in many subjects. Adults regularly check the progress pupils are making, particularly in English and mathematics, adapting the provision if a pupil requires additional support. Pupils have the opportunity to make good progress and achieve well. This is especially the case in key stage 4.
- Leaders identify pupils who can go on to achieve more challenging courses by the time they reach key stage 4. This varies from year to year and depends on pupils' individual SEN needs and/or disabilities. In 2018, all pupils who left the school at the end of key stage 4, achieved from level one to level three in English and mathematics functional skills. This academic year, more pupils are preparing for GCSEs.
- The school can offer a range of courses for pupil to excel. These include geography, art, music, computing, physical education, cooking and gardening. By key stage 4, science is not offered due to the specialist equipment required to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum at this stage.
- Pupils receive very carefully considered transition plans when they start at the school. This enables pupils to settle quickly into routines. School assessment information demonstrates the success of these transitions as pupils often make swift progress from their starting points.
- When most pupils leave the school, they go on to college or into work if they choose to do so. Pupils have meaningful work placements and careers guidance so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. A few pupils return to the school for one day a week as an alternative placement to college. All transitions to college are carefully planned so that pupils are successful.
- Evidence from pupils' workbooks and the school's own assessment information shows that pupils who are disadvantaged achieve as well as others in the school.

- The quality of education for children who start in Reception is thoughtfully planned so that the youngest children settle quickly. Adults use the information from children's EHCPs precisely to plan learning activities that meet individual needs.
- Pupils do not make as much progress as they could in key stage 3. Pupils could do even better, especially those who have been in the school longest. School information shows some variation in the progress pupils make. Pupils' books indicate that pupils often complete similar work irrespective of their individual needs and that the most able are not provided with sufficient work that extends their thinking. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Although pupils make good progress, the link to pupils precisely achieving the targets set in their EHCP could be strengthened further. Leaders have recognised that this has been an issue in the past. They have recently introduced a new way to check how well pupils achieve their targets and the links made to the EHCP.

School details

Unique reference number	117672
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053044

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Harper
Executive Headteacher	Stephen Houlton-Allen
Telephone number	01442 398988
Website	www.collett.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@collett.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2014

Information about this school

- The Collett School provides education for pupils who have a range of complex SEN and/or disabilities. The majority have autism spectrum disorder, and a significant number have speech, language and communication needs.
- All pupils have an EHCP.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes. The school can educate children from the age of four years old. The number of Reception-age children has been small over several years and is too low to make a separate judgement on their education.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above that found nationally.
- The school provides alternative education for students in key stage 4, in partnership with West Herts College.
- Since September 2017, the school has been working in association with another local

special school. The executive headteacher leads both. In January 2019, The Collett School is due to change to a Foundation school. At that point a federation for both schools with one governing body will be established.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of information to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with school leaders.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils, considered books, EHCPs, and the school's own assessment information to check the progress pupils make over time.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, other senior leaders and middle leaders. A meeting was held with the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for future improvement and the school's evaluation of its own performance.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were examined, including the statutory information on the recruitment of staff.
- The inspectors spoke with parents and staff to gather their views. Parental views were analysed from the 55 responses to the Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 42 comments they made using the free-text service.
- Staff views were also analysed from 65 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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