

The Shrubberies School

Oldends Lane, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2DG

Inspection dates

18–19 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In a range of subjects and areas of study, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They are well prepared to move on to the next stages of their education, including their transfer to the sixth form or a local college.
- Teaching is good across the school. Teachers ensure activities are interesting and, as a result, pupils participate well and enjoy their learning. Behaviour is well managed and relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- Early years provision is good. Strong leadership has improved planning, the quality of assessment and opportunities for children to use different forms of communication. Progress is good because staff ensure high levels of interaction, and communicate with children well.
- The sixth form is well led and students respond very well to the more adult environment and high expectations.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around school, which helps ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils feel safe and are well supported by regular routines.
- Good leadership and management at all levels, including governance, provide a strong focus on teaching and learning. As a result, the school has sustained the good achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety and leadership and management found at the previous inspection. It has also extended provision in the sixth form.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through well planned programmes of study and by the school's very positive atmosphere for learning.
- Governors know the school well and they hold leaders and managers to account very effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' mathematics skills and understanding are underdeveloped, partly because of limited opportunities to apply them in other subjects and activities.
- Information gathered from monitoring pupils' achievement is not always used precisely enough to improve teaching.
- Sometimes pupils are not given enough opportunity to develop independence and make choices.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons, two of them with senior managers. Lunchtime and break arrangements were seen.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to individual pupils read to them, using either text or symbols.
- The school's work was observed. Inspectors looked at a range of documents including those relating to keeping pupils safe, records of behaviour and attendance, and information on pupils' progress and development.
- Inspectors analysed 47 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Twenty responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View were analysed, and an inspector spoke informally to parents collecting their children after school.

Inspection team

Michael Farrell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Richard Hill	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A small proportion of pupils either have, or are being assessed for, the new Education, Health and Care Plans. The pupils' main special educational needs are severe or profound learning difficulties.
- Children start in the Nursery from the age of two, attending for three days a week. Some pupils enter the school at a later age.
- One in five pupils are girls.
- Most pupils are White British. Just over one in 10 pupils is from a minority ethnic group.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is above average. About 5% of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The school receives sport funding for primary aged pupils.
- Year 7 pupils receive literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- No pupils take GCSEs, and the school uses no alternative providers.
- Since the previous inspection, the sixth form has moved into new accommodation, about 10 minutes' walk from the main school. About a third of sixth form students come from the Shrubberies School and about two thirds transfer from other special schools. A new head of sixth form was appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics, by extending opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics skills and knowledge across the range of different subjects and activities.
- Improve teaching by using information from monitoring pupils' achievement more precisely to identify weaker aspects of learning and provide appropriate remedies.
- Improve pupils' development of independence by ensuring that more opportunities are taken to encourage pupils to make their own choices and to work on their own.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by senior staff and those with responsibilities for subjects and areas of study, conveys high expectations. Staff respond fully.
- Effective systems for staff professional development support a strong focus on teaching and learning. Staff recognise the effective management of their performance. One staff member stated, 'You are fully involved in the process.'
- Most parents are fully engaged with the school. They receive timely information about their child's achievements.
- The school's programmes of study provide rich, varied activities which motivate pupils highly. Communication and personal and social skills are encouraged especially well. British values are promoted strongly through assemblies, lessons and the valuing of individual pupils.
- Spiritual development is effectively promoted through religious education lessons and assemblies. Moral education is encouraged well through staff guiding pupils to be increasingly aware of the needs of others. Social skills are enhanced through the school council and participation in the local community. Cultural awareness is successfully developed through art, music, visits and visitors.
- Pupils have equal opportunities to do well because the wide range of activities provides opportunities for them to succeed and build confidence. There is no evidence of discrimination.
- Older pupils and sixth formers receive guidance helping them understand the next steps for the future.
- The local authority has provided effective training for governors. The school also uses external advisers to support their work, for example through shared lesson observations.
- Safeguarding meets requirements, supported by good systems to keep pupils safe.
- Pupil premium money is carefully used to support families and for computer equipment including 'apps' to improve individual pupils' communication. Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to improve pupils' standards by extending mathematics tuition and by purchasing computer software for supporting literacy and numeracy. Sport funding is well deployed to extend opportunities, such as horse riding, leading to increased participation in physical activities.
- The outcomes of monitoring of teaching, pupils' work, and planning are coordinated to provide a broad picture of provision. However, the school does not always identify weaker aspects of learning (such as using and applying mathematics) precisely enough to act as a focus for improving teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are highly motivated, know the school well, and provide a good level of challenge to the school's leaders. They know what pupils achieve through seeing lessons and receiving reports. However, governors do not always ensure the school provides very specific information about some aspects of progress to ensure this is being used effectively to improve teaching. They have a clear view of the quality of teaching through observing activities and having discussions with staff. Governors oversee pupils' safety conscientiously. They manage the performance of the headteacher thoroughly and have a more general oversight of the performance of other staff. This enables governors to ensure that teachers pay is linked to their successful performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is encouraged by the school's very positive atmosphere for learning. Staff also act as good role models for pupils, showing patience and respect for others.
- Pupils enjoy their schooling, attend regularly and start lessons on time. This has a strong and positive effect on their achievement. Pupils speak positively about their experiences of school.
- The well organised lunchtimes are social occasions and pupils enjoy the food cooked on the premises. Behaviour is particularly good at morning break times because they are very well organised and provide pupils with plenty to do.
- Pupils respond well to staff guidance and seek help when necessary. They are increasingly considerate of others.
- Pupils take a full part in the life of the school. For example, some are involved in recruiting staff, and there is an active school council.
- When behavioural issues occasionally occur they are handled consistently and sensitively by staff, so that

any disruption to learning is minimised.

- Parents generally have a positive view of behaviour. Staff recognise that some pupils have behavioural difficulties, which they manage very effectively, but rightly state that overall behaviour is good. Pupils consider behaviour is good.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are effectively highly encouraged to develop their independence skills and choose for themselves. These skills, however, are not as well developed in the younger years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe, and parents are confident their child is safe. Staff are vigilant with regard to pupils' safety.
- The school is highly effective in encouraging communication, including signing. This gives pupils confidence to express their views. They know that they will be listened to and any concerns will be acted upon.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of what bullying is. They say that bullying is not an issue in the school. Older pupils state that there is sometimes name calling, but that where this happens staff deal with it appropriately.
- According to their age and ability, pupils generally understand about how to keep safe in different situations. Older pupils recognise that you have to be careful when using the internet.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers use praise effectively. This encourages pupils' involvement in lessons and their good behaviour.
- In lessons, teachers create a positive environment for learning in which pupils work hard. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, where pupils learned well because they enjoyed the choice of activities. They improved their number skills through responding positively to the requirement to take turns in a number board game.
- Behaviour is well managed. Staff use a range of effective strategies to ensure pupils' good behaviour and attention. Occasional minor disruptions are dealt with calmly so that learning continues quickly.
- Teachers structure their lessons well to help ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy achievements, and the skills that lead to these, are successfully encouraged. Pupils' communication skills are very well developed.
- Lesson planning is based on meeting pupils' individual needs, providing interesting and stimulating activities to help ensure that pupils try hard. Pupils in Key Stage 4 did well writing their news diaries. This was because the teacher stretched them by asking questions about their writing and encouraging them to extend it.
- Recent experience is used where possible. This was so in a lesson where older pupils wrote about a very recent trip to a local museum. They achieved well because they had enjoyed the trip and vividly remembered it.
- Lessons, typically, are characterised by good relationships, humour and high levels of enjoyment. Staff encourage pupils' communication effectively, including through the use of signing. Teaching assistants and teachers work closely together to enhance learning.
- Assessments of learning are made as lessons progress, through questioning and checking pupils' understanding. Marking and annotating of pupils' work also provide a record of continuing progress. Teachers use this in their planning of subsequent lessons to ensure that work is pitched at the right level.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities in other subjects and activities to use and practise their mathematical knowledge and skills, so they are not as strongly established as they should be.
- Occasionally, teachers do not promote pupils' independence enough or encourage pupils to make choices. For example, sometimes pupils are unnecessarily helped with tasks so that they do not learn to persist.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They do so in a range of subjects, including literacy and numeracy, art and physical education.
- Different groups, including boys and girls, pupils of different ages, and those with differing special educational needs, all make good progress. The most able pupils make good progress because they are given challenging work and teachers make clear what they are expected to achieve.

- Owing to their severe and profound learning difficulties, pupils in the school reach standards that are well below those of pupils in other schools nationally. Disadvantaged pupils achieve similarly to other pupils in the school because work and support are targeted to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects and activities. In a music lesson in Key Stage 3, pupils played various drum rhythms and simple tunes on a xylophone. Pupils were enthused by the way staff sensitively interacted with them, and by the range of resources that were available. In Key Stage 2, pupils achieved well in developing the skills that lead to writing as they were absorbed in drawing circles with felt tip pens, chalk, and using a magnetic writing device.
- Pupils who can read, including those who use symbols, do so often and say that they enjoy reading. They use various strategies to help themselves, including breaking down and putting together the sounds of letters.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, whether moving through the school or as older pupils moving to the sixth form or to the local college of further education.
- Older pupils take a suitable range of qualifications. They take part in well-organised work experience activities in school and beyond, for example by helping in a garden nursery and a charity shop.
- Communication is prioritised through the use of a wide range of approaches, including speaking and listening, signing, the use of symbols that can be exchanged, and visual aids.
- In 2013–14, mathematics progress was not as strong as that in English, partly because of limited opportunities to apply mathematics skills and knowledge more widely in other subjects.

The early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and management have led to improvements in the provision since the previous inspection. The rich learning environment fosters good relationships and helps promote British values.
- The well-developed opportunities for learning ensure that children are involved and participate well. Reception children respond very well to praise and guidance and the staff's use of signing to promote their learning. In the Nursery, children's language is developed well through the strong interaction with staff. Changes of activity happen smoothly because staff communicate very clearly what is expected. Staff regularly seize opportunities to extend language and understanding of sounds during activities.
- Effective assessments of children's progress and development and the setting of challenging targets lead to effective planning for learning.
- Because of good teaching, children enjoy their learning, making good progress and achieving well. Children are well prepared to enter Year 1.
- Staff know children's individual needs well, and they use this to promote the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Children behave very well. They feel safe through understanding the rules and routines of the provision.
- Parents say that they appreciate the good range of information that they receive.
- Occasionally, the most able children are not challenged enough because opportunities are missed to extend their learning.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The strong leadership of the head of the sixth form has, in a comparatively short time, ensured a clear sense of direction. Staff use information effectively to monitor provision and to identify where improvements can be made.
- Good teaching ensures that activities are relevant to students' needs and daily life and capture their interest. Communication is prioritised, as seen in a lesson in which the teacher focused on the use of computer technology to aid communication, and students responded very well.
- Teachers provide imaginative activities to open students' eyes to other cultures. In one lesson, a film clip of an Indian festival, in which participants decorated their faces with powder paint, provided an interesting context. Students then created designs using powder paint on damp paper. They tried hard and achieved well because their interest was stimulated.
- Students behave well, responding positively to high expectations, good behaviour management, and the more 'adult' atmosphere of the sixth form. They know and follow their individual targets such as 'I will speak to visitors appropriately'.
- Students make good progress in a range of subjects and achieve well because they enjoy their innovative

and practical activities and concentrate hard on their work. They say they especially enjoy cooking, swimming, mathematics, and the 'lovely trips'. A suitable range of examinations, including ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) entry level qualifications, demonstrates clearly the good achievement in vocational and other, more academic, areas.

- Disadvantaged students achieve similarly to others because work is pitched to meet the needs of individual students.
- Strong careers guidance contributes well to established procedures for helping students move on to the next stage.
- Students say they feel safe and they behave with consideration for others.
- Leaders and managers ensure that students have opportunities for work experience and to engage in activities in the local community. However, these are not as wide ranging as they should be.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	115823
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	449456

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Kingston
Headteacher	Jane Jones
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 November 2011
Telephone number	01453 822155
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