

Shenstone School

94, Old Road, Crayford, Kent, DA1 4DZ

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because

- The majority of pupils make at least good progress, particularly in their communication and numeracy skills, as a result of skilled teaching.
- Since the previous inspection the number of pupils making outstanding progress has steadily increased year on year.
- Most pupils make good progress in recognising the shapes and sounds of some individual letters, whilst a very few pupils learn to blend letters together into words.
- Teaching is good throughout the school and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that lessons are appropriately adapted to individual learning needs.
- Pupils enjoy school. They are very well cared for within a safe and secure environment. Their behaviour is excellent, given their complex learning needs, and their attendance is above average. Adults manage behaviour very well and this contributes to the school's calm and friendly atmosphere.
- The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well, supported by a governing body who provides a good level of challenge. Together, they have rigorously monitored and improved every aspect of the school's provision, especially the standards of teaching, since the previous inspection and consequently pupils' achievement has improved and continues to do so.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On a few occasions teachers do not record every small step in each pupil's learning. Some consequent target setting is thus less precise and this can slow down the pace of progress.
- Although provision for the pupils' communication difficulties is good overall, there are occasional inconsistencies which affect the pupils' ability to respond fully.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, all of which were joint observations with members of the senior team.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, teaching assistants, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a letter received from a parent.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, and looked at a range of the school’s documentation, including development planning and the school’s self evaluation, performance and other records of the pupils’ progress, information relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to the safeguarding of the children.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Diane Rochford	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for their severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, including those with autism and complex medical needs.
- Pupils come from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the population of the borough.
- Over a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is above the national average.
- There are more boys than girls in the school and an above average number are at the early stages of learning English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that each small step in each pupil's progress is fully recorded so that teachers are able to plan sharp, focused, daily and weekly individual targets to promote even faster progress.
- Improve the quality of provision for teaching communication by:
 - ensuring consistency in the use of symbols
 - ensuring that all adults experience a sound level of training to provide consistently for the needs of pupils with autism and communication difficulties.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- The rate of progress by pupils has accelerated since the previous inspection. A majority of pupils now make above nationally expected progress by the time they leave in Year 6.
- Pupils enter the school with very low standards of attainment because of their severe and profound learning difficulties. Despite this, pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in communication and in their understanding and use of number. As the pupils progress through the school, they learn well to respond to adults and to initiate communication through gesture or symbols. They enjoy stories and singing games and respond with interest and concentration.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid progress in their communication and in their personal skills. This gives them a good start to their education.
- The pupils from different ethnic groups, those eligible for the pupil premium and those at an early stage of learning English achieve equally well. Very few pupils have any language and provision to enhance all the pupils' language has long been a priority for the school. As a result, the school ensures successfully that all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress and get a 'good deal' from their education.
- The growing numbers of pupils with severe autism make equally good progress as a result of sensitive and patient teaching, usually on an individual basis. The pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well through a sensory-based curriculum which enables them to participate and respond to learning experiences. As these children progress through the school, they learn to make more deliberate and sustained eye contact and to express their wishes through facial expressions and the use of switches.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Their communication and physical abilities are carefully analysed and provided for. This gives them the confidence to express their wishes and to make relevant choices. They develop good attitudes to their learning, enjoy their lessons and concentrate for longer and longer periods as they move through the school. This has a significant impact on raising their achievement.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The overall quality of teaching over time is good. Almost all lessons are well taught and some lessons are outstanding. Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes to learning because teachers create interesting and well pitched lessons for each pupil. The pupils enjoy learning and are consistently interested and engaged in their work.
- Teachers and other adults have a very clear knowledge and understanding of their pupils and their individual needs. This is because there is a high proportion of adults in each classroom and almost all pupils receive a very substantial amount of individual tuition and support. In almost every lesson, as a matter of course, the achievements of the pupils are carefully assessed and noted and this information is used skilfully by teachers to plan the next small step in each pupil's learning. As a result, adults have specific and high expectations of their pupils to which the pupils respond well. On occasion, however, adults do not record learning as carefully. This sometimes leads to less precise targets and can slow down the pace of pupils' learning.
- Teachers manage their classrooms well. They direct teaching assistants effectively so that individual and group teaching is purposeful and productive. Adults listen to, and mostly carefully observe, the pupils. They are thus able to provide experiences, extend learning and ask well adapted questions to ensure pupils have understood their work and know how to make further progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are well known to adults and their individual needs are well catered for. Teachers use the early years curriculum to good effect in stimulating the children's interest and in promoting their communication and

personal skills.

- Pupils with autism are taught well because staff know each individual pupil's abilities and interests. There is a growing use of symbols which are effective in helping pupils understand instructions and make choices. Other aids to communication, such as interactive whiteboards, are used creatively to provide the necessary visual cues for pupils with severe communication difficulties.
- The use of symbols is, however, occasionally inconsistent. For instance, two distinct systems are in use which can confuse pupils. Some less experienced staff lack a full range of advanced skills with which to meet fully the needs of each pupil with autism.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. They enter the school and their classroom with big smiles and are eager to greet adults and get on with the day. They concentrate to the best of their abilities, are always interested in their activities and respond very well to adults and each other.
- Their behaviour is excellent. Where pupils become distracted or frustrated with their inability to communicate, staff deal with situations quickly and calmly to which the pupils respond very well. Relationships are good and the pupils tolerate and support their classmates very sympathetically and patiently. They demonstrate many tiny ways in which they care for others in looks and smiles or touch. They have a growing understanding of right and wrong. Their moral and social development is excellent and promoted very effectively by the school.
- As the pupils progress through the school, they gradually learn better ways to control their own behaviour and to understand the need to relate appropriately to others. As a result of good teaching, they develop an interest in the world and in the many varied experiences they enjoy. Their spiritual and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school maintains excellent records of each pupil's behaviour. Detailed risk assessments, approved by parents, are used to ensure that pupils receive excellent care and support when necessary. Bullying in any form is unheard of in the school. There is an absence of discrimination. Sanctions are not required and there have been no exclusions over many years. Attendance is good and well above average for similar schools. A few pupils with chronic and debilitating illness have periods of absence and the school supports parents and carers well in these situations.
- The quality of care is outstanding. Pupils are very safe and well looked after. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the appropriate vetting of staff are very secure. All staff are well trained in the whole range of techniques and procedures to ensure pupils are safely moved and managed, and in a range of medical procedures such as for dealing with epilepsy.
- Pupils have a high level of affection and trust in adults at school. Adults respond with a very good quality of care which parents greatly appreciate. One parent stated, 'This is a fully inclusive school where each child is encouraged to fulfil their potential.'

The leadership and management are good

- The school's leaders, through rigorous and regular monitoring, maintain a good overview of pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching. The tracking of pupils' performance is robust and any perceived underachievement is quickly tackled. As a result of good assessment and recording, the annual reviews of pupils' progress and personal development are exemplary in their detail and the quality of information given to parents. This leads to comprehensive, focused individual learning plans for each pupil which are evaluated regularly.

- The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and improved. Staff fully subscribe to the school's culture of care for, and high expectations of, pupils. Morale is high. The results of regular parental surveys and discussions are incorporated appropriately into the school's development planning.
 - The headteacher and her deputy are active in monitoring teachers' performance. There are robust procedures to ensure teaching improves consistently through secure practice in performance management procedures. All staff work to achieve challenging targets for their performance and development. This is supplemented and supported by targeted training in aspects of curriculum development and in techniques to improve its delivery. The school acknowledges that there is a remaining need to enhance skill levels in some respects.
 - The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and has been adapted effectively to meet the learning needs of its pupils. Communication, early literacy and numeracy are given a high priority and are integrated into each topic which the pupils experience. Recent work on topics on, for example, The Olympics and The Queen's Diamond Jubilee demonstrate a high level of interactive communication, letter and word making and aspects of counting.
 - However, the two communication systems in use weaken the otherwise strong provision within the curriculum to enhance communication skills.
 - The many trips and visits and visitors to school, such as in the recent steel band workshop, add to the pupils' enjoyment and help develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The pupils enjoy every aspect of their school day. This helps to account for their excellent behaviour and good attendance and promotes their good achievement.
 - The school has a good track record of consolidating its strengths and maintaining the momentum of further improvement. Monitoring is rigorous and effective. Teaching has shown consistent improvement over time, with just some inconsistencies remaining, and with it improvements in pupils' achievement. The school evaluates its own progress well. As a result, there is a good capacity to bring about further improvement.
 - The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body has grown significantly in effectiveness since the previous inspection. Under a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, governors have developed their ability to robustly challenge and support the school
 - governors are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school through regular visits, meetings with parents and regular presentations by key staff
 - the governing body ensures all statutory obligations are met and is successfully using information about performance management procedures to hold staff, including the headteacher, to account.
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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

Unique reference number	101486
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	400480

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Gilbert
Headteacher	Linda Aldcroft
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 June 2010
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