

Spa School

Monnow Road, London, SE1 5RN

Inspection dates

5–6 December 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.

- Spa School has maintained its good outcomes from the previous inspection
- In relation to their starting points, students make good and sometimes exceptional progress, particularly in their communication skills and personal development.
- All staff know the students well and teaching is good overall. Teaching has improved because of good quality staff training.
- The family liaison officer is effective in helping students and their parents to make the best of the support that is available to them.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Students feel exceptionally safe in school because of the highly supportive relationships they enjoy with staff.
- The post-16 provision is good. Each student has a course of study designed just for them. They have good opportunities to learn employment skills in the school café. All successfully gain qualifications.
- The headteacher and his deputy, with good support from the governing body, provide effective leadership, including regular reviews of staff performance. The areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The data collected by the school do not show clearly enough the progress students make in relation to national expectations.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to enable students to make exceptional progress.
- A few of the more-able students in the school are not making rapid enough progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons and/or parts of lessons taught by all of the teachers in the school.
- Over a third of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and/or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff, a representative from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of parents and a group of pupils. The inspectors also talked informally to students and staff around the school.
- Many documents were reviewed, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour management and students' progress, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and documents covering the performance management arrangements for staff.
- The inspectors took account of the school's surveys of parents' and students' views, five responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the responses in 14 completed staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Buist

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Spa School provides for students who have a range of special educational needs including moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and speech, language and communication needs. An increasing number of students have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties in addition to their learning difficulties.
- There are more boys than girls. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost half of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average.
- Many students have had disruptions to their education before starting at Spa School.
- A higher-than-average number of students come from minority ethnic groups.
- The school is accredited for autism by the National Autistic Society.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- During the current academic year, improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - always make it very clear what each student is expected to learn in every lesson and not just what they have to do, especially the more-able students
 - use more open questions so that students have the opportunity to explain and demonstrate their growing levels of knowledge, understanding and skills
 - give students more time to get on with their work by reducing the time the teacher spends talking in lessons to the whole class
 - set work at the right level so that it challenges each student individually throughout the lesson.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - refining the information available on students' learning so that it shows more clearly how the progress made by students across all key stages relates to national expectations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment, because of their special educational needs, is well below that of students nationally. Many students arrive at the school having had a poor start to their education and are very reluctant to participate in lessons. However, the progress they make from their starting points is good, and in terms of their personal and social development it is excellent.
- Within a short time, students settle and acquire the skills that are needed for learning. This was seen in lessons in which students with autism spectrum disorder were learning to listen, take turns and to share.
- Teachers have received training in the use of a range of approaches to meet the increasingly complex needs of the students. As a result, many students are able to learn quickly and their rates of progress have increased since the previous inspection.
- Students achieve well. Daily reading sessions across the school have improved students' reading skills and their confidence and progress in reading and writing. Many students are able to read for enjoyment and to find out information. This clear focus on literacy skills is helping students to make good progress from their low starting points.
- Students' progress in communication is outstanding because staff always use a range of communication methods, such as pictures and symbols, and technology, such as touch screen tablets, very effectively to support students' learning. This, for example, helps students to understand the order of the day and when to start and finish activities and to express their needs and wishes.
- The achievement of post-16 students is good. The school has extended the range of courses available for older students, including through access to effective off-site settings, so that all leave with external awards which match their abilities. They develop good self-help and independence skills, for instance through learning how to make simple meals in the school café.
- All students achieve external awards in a broad range of subjects, mainly at entry level. Steadily increasing numbers of students achieve GCSE grades at the lower levels.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to accelerate learning for students known to be eligible for free school meals. It is used to pay additional staff to provide targeted speech and language therapy that has resulted in students making similar progress to their classmates, and sometimes exceeding it.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, receive appropriate help and support. As a result, their progress is similar to that of their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving, but not consistently strong enough to be outstanding.
- The grouping of students by learning needs and by stages of development, rather than simply by age, has enabled teachers and teaching assistants to create classroom environments which help students to be ready to learn.
- Teachers pay particular attention to developing students' communication skills by providing lots of sensory experiences and practical activities. For instance, in a Key Stage 4 English lesson, sensory materials and music were used effectively by the teacher to develop students' understanding of the setting of a story. Each student was motivated to participate in an activity, which was fully adapted to their individual interests, so that all remained on task and made good progress in their learning.
- Teachers and other adults work closely with speech and language and occupational therapists to give, when appropriate, extra support and guidance to students throughout all lessons.
- The best lessons are well organised and students are clear about what they will learn. Lessons

move along at a brisk pace and students are attentive and interested throughout. Questioning is used very skilfully to check on students' understanding and teaching is adapted when necessary to improve learning. This was clearly seen in an excellent information and communication technology lesson where the teacher encouraged students to deepen their understanding of geography through questions which had more than one answer. This helped students to develop their skills in reasoning and take greater responsibility for their learning as they used maps on the computer to show they understood.

- In a few lessons, teachers do not make it clear enough what they want each individual student to learn in the lesson and the focus is more on what students have to do rather than what they are to learn. Over-long teacher explanations at the start of some lessons reduce the amount of time students have to complete their work. Questioning is not always used well to extend students' learning and understanding. Occasionally, this results in the more-able students making less progress than they should.
- The teaching is good in the post-16 provision. The curriculum ensures students learn how to apply their basic skills appropriately. Adults provide very good support as students engage in taster college days and placements and interact with the wider community in their leisure pursuits and work experience.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students get on exceptionally well with each other and show respect for other students and adults. Although students sometimes find it hard to behave well, this never interrupts the learning in lessons because teachers and support staff are highly skilled in knowing exactly what to say and do. Students are very well focused and can explain clearly how their behaviour affects learning. As one said, 'We have to listen to the teacher to learn.'
- Staff show students courtesy and respect and students reciprocate. Those who met with the inspectors painted a very positive picture of a school where they feel safe and happy. This is a view endorsed by parents. Excellent daily reports help to keep them well informed about their children's progress and behaviour.
- Students say they feel safe, well cared for and supported at school. They know what to do to stay safe, including when using computers. Bullying is rare, but students understand some of the different forms it can take and what to do if it should ever happen.
- Students' independence and responsibility are well promoted throughout the school. Post-16 students enjoy the opportunities to demonstrate their independence through cooking meals, attending college and undertaking work placements in the school café.
- Attendance has improved because students enjoy coming to school. The work of the family liaison officer in supporting problems is having very positive results for both the school and families.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides perceptive and highly effective leadership. Procedures for the performance management of teachers and the training offered them are effective. There is now no inadequate teaching and an increasing amount which is good and outstanding.
- All teachers have targets to improve students' achievement and reviews of teacher performance are linked to salary progression. Specialist training in the management of students' behaviour has clearly been beneficial.
- Middle managers take responsibility for ensuring high standards in their areas of responsibility. This shared leadership motivates staff and everyone is committed to raising standards for the students.

- School leaders check individual students' progress regularly and thoroughly in English, mathematics and science. They use this information effectively to inform their evaluation of the school's performance, but recognise that it needs to show more readily the progress students make across all key stages in relation to national expectations.
 - There is no discrimination in the school and all students, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, make similarly good progress as a result of individual learning programmes.
 - Much successful work has been carried out to support parents and carers in managing their children's behaviour and helping them improve their communication skills. As one parent commented, 'This school has been a lifesaver for me.'
 - The curriculum is outstanding. It is rich and varied and meets the needs and interests of all students exceptionally well. It ensures that students develop the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy, but also creates additional opportunities through, for example, the partnership with the Young Vic Theatre and the London Symphony Orchestra. As a result, students are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage in their lives when they leave school. All students go on to further education, training or employment.
 - Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place both in the school and in the alternative placements students attend. The school works very closely with other agencies and with parents to ensure the well-being of those who might be at risk because of their learning difficulties or circumstances.
 - The local authority knows the school well and has given tailored support to match the needs of the school. This has been effective in supporting improvements since the last inspection.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective in its support for the school, whilst at the same time holding it to account for its performance and students' achievement. It is involved in school improvement planning and in checking and evaluating the performance of the headteacher. Governors check how well senior leaders evaluate staff performance and relate this to pay and promotion. The governing body also ensures safeguarding procedures are of a high standard. The finance committee carefully oversees the allocation and use of pupil premium funding, although it recognises that it has not fully evaluated the difference this has made to student performance.
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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	100873
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	400433

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Bridget Gilchrist
Headteacher	Mr Simon Eccles
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2010
Telephone number	02072 373714
Fax number	02072 376601
Email address	headteacher@spa.southwark.sch.uk

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