

Heatherwood School

Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN2 6HQ

Inspection dates 9–10 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Everyone who works in the school shares the headteacher's sky-high aspirations for each and every pupil.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well. Although their learning moves forward in very small steps these often represent enormous progress.
- Progress in learning to communicate is especially strong. Staff find out exactly which methods best suit each pupil and make sure these are practised during all lessons and everyday activities.
- Teachers use their detailed knowledge of individual pupils expertly. They plan activities that capture pupils' interest and enable them to learn as well as possible.
- Staff are always kind and helpful. However, they insist that pupils do as much for themselves as they can so they make the maximum progress. Pupils are ready to make remarkable efforts because they like the staff and have great confidence in them.
- Pupils show extremely clearly how greatly they enjoy being at school. They are happy to tackle new experiences and feel very safe amongst other pupils and the staff.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The curriculum is carefully organised to equip students with the skills they will need in their future lives. They are sociable and confident young adults.
- Since the last inspection, thoughtful, knowledgeable and determined leadership has resulted in marked improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Staff, leaders and governors are always looking for ways of improving what they provide for pupils.
- A great deal of support is offered to parents. There are very close links with other schools, which benefit Heatherwood's pupils and others who are disabled or have special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by teachers, a higher level teaching assistant and the school’s communication leader. One observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher and another with the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with staff, a group of pupils, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at information about the progress made across the school by different groups of pupils. They examined the detailed records of eight pupils.
- Not enough responses had been made to the on-line questionnaire (ParentView) for an analysis to be available. The inspectors talked to the school’s parent support adviser and looked at the outcomes of her discussions with parents about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Rosemary Eaton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Katharine Halifax

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils with profound and multiple or severe learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many of the pupils have complex physical and medical needs.
- Half of the pupils are dependent on adults in respect of eating and drinking. Over two-thirds rely on adults to move them around in wheelchairs.
- Few pupils communicate through speech.
- Half of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium which is a higher than average proportion.
- A team of nurses and therapists is based at the school.
- The school provides an outreach service for pupils with disabilities in other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Carry out the school's plans to help its more-able pupils make even faster progress in reading by teaching them to use the sounds made by letters in order to read new words.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Detailed information gathered by staff about the learning and development of each pupil shows outstanding progress, including in literacy and numeracy. When their starting points are considered, the achievement of less- and more-able pupils is equally remarkable.
- It takes time for individuals to take tiny steps in learning and staff and pupils are delighted when another milestone is reached. For example, in one lesson a more-able child in the nursery spoke a three-word sentence for the first time. On another significant occasion, an older pupil with much more profound needs deliberately banged a toy on his wheelchair tray.
- Pupils seldom use speech in order to communicate. Staff, including the school's team of experts, find alternative methods, for example, pointing with eyes, signing, exchanging pictures or using electronic devices. Pupils who would otherwise be unable to make choices or express themselves become increasingly able to communicate. The excellent progress they make enables pupils to learn other skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy.
- In reading, less-able pupils show that they recognise familiar rhymes and stories. They sometimes indicate that they want to see a book again or look at particular illustrations. More-able pupils read symbols or words that they have learned to recognise.
- Most pupils are in the very early stages of learning to write. They often need help in order to grasp tools and make marks, using rollers or brushes for instance. Some go on to use pencils and crayons and a few of the most able pupils write recognisable letters.
- In numeracy, pupils typically make best progress in learning about objects and shapes because they can touch and handle these. Some of the less able pupils learn to stack shapes and find objects that have been hidden. The most able pupils start to count, add and subtract.
- The school's links with the hospital school help to ensure that the learning of pupils with medical conditions is disrupted as little as possible during unavoidable absences. For some pupils, it is a huge achievement to retain their skills in spite of their ill-health.
- Secondary-aged students and those in the sixth form follow some courses that enable them to gain certificates and awards. These vary, depending on students' abilities, so they can all show how much they have achieved. Students continue to make outstanding progress in communication, literacy and numeracy. They apply their skills to real-life situations, such as shopping or running a business enterprise.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make the same outstanding progress as others with similar starting points. The additional money is used wisely, for example, to provide these pupils with experiences, such as taking part in after-school activities, that they might otherwise not have.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers know pupils and their needs exceptionally well. This enables them to plan lessons and activities that are at just the right level for individual pupils, leading them firmly towards the next step in learning. For example, in Key Stage 2, writing tasks for different pupils ranged from moving grains of rice in a tray, initially with an adult's help, to tracing over letters. As a result of this excellent planning, which is typical in this school, each pupil made remarkable progress.
- Activities are chosen with great care to motivate pupils and be highly relevant to their current and future needs. For instance, Key Stage 3 pupils learned to recognise coins and then visited a supermarket to choose and pay for snacks.
- The various groups of staff work closely together during lessons. Teamwork is first-rate. For example, specialist staff unobtrusively make sure pupils are positioned so as to meet their health needs and enable them to learn in comfort. Therapy, such as encouraging a pupil to use a certain hand, is frequently part of lessons and this means that time for learning is used to the full.

- Teachers choose equipment and materials expertly with particular pupils in mind. In the Early Years Foundation Stage class, children decorated a tree with sparkling snowflakes. One snowflake had a large loop for the child to hold, another had to be grasped in both hands and a string of small snowflakes enabled a child with less mobility to take part in the activity. Each of the resources was designed to enable a child to work on a skill that was important to them and resulted in exceptional progress.
- Staff treat pupils with warmth and enormous respect. These superb relationships contribute greatly to pupils' learning. They are confident to try new experiences because they know that staff will look after them. However, staff do not do things for pupils that they can be expected to do for themselves. Key Stage 4 pupils all helped to clear up after their art lesson.
- Communication skills form the bedrock of teaching in all lessons. In a Key Stage 2 reading lesson, the teacher allowed plenty of time for each pupil to react to a puppet dog, for example, by looking at it, reaching out, or using their voice or technology to say 'Hello'. Staff recognise even the most fleeting attempts at communication and praise pupils for their efforts.
- Skills of all kinds are taught with great expertise. Up to now, the school has not taught its most-able pupils to read by linking together the sounds made by letters.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils express their delight in school, lessons and learning in many ways. A minority use words or electronic communicators to describe their feelings: 'It's really good'. For others, laughter and smiles say it all. Sixth form students hugged themselves with pleasure as their image and choice of music were displayed on the whiteboard.
- Staff make sure pupils are aware of each other and encourage them to form friendships. Pupils get along together exceptionally well and show care and concern. They are pleased when classmates are successful, share and take turns and are polite and helpful.
- Pupils take a lively interest in their work and are very keen to get involved. They try exceptionally hard, often making enormous physical efforts as they persevere with tasks that are demanding.
- Behaviour is almost always exemplary, in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime.
- Individual programmes are created for the few pupils who need help in order to control their own behaviour and emotions. These are highly successful because staff follow agreed procedures and so pupils learn what is expected of them.
- Pupils say or show that they are not frightened by anything or anyone at school. There is no evidence of any bullying behaviour. Parents and staff express no concerns about pupils' behaviour or safety.
- Pupils' attendance is checked carefully. They are seldom absent unless they have health problems.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff, leaders and governors know the school's goals and direction because the headteacher ensured they all contributed to these. Their actions clearly demonstrate they are determined that every pupil will achieve as much as possible.
- Staff, leaders and governors help to identify where the school's work could be improved. For example, the literacy leader has created a plan for teaching the most-able pupils to use the sounds made by letters to help them read.
- The deputy headteacher has improved the way the school compares the progress made by different groups of pupils. This now helps leaders check rigorously on the success of the school's work and particularly the performance of teachers.
- Information collected about the quality of teaching is used extremely well. It helps leaders to

decide priorities for improvement and to make sure that teachers' pay is linked to the quality of their work and their responsibilities.

- Leaders organise training based on their knowledge of staff. Staff also identify where they wish to improve, research courses and ask to observe lessons taught by teachers who have expertise in a particular area. Teachers each have a buddy with whom they discuss their work and share ideas. These are all reasons why teaching has improved so much.
 - The curriculum focuses on crucial skills and opportunities for pupils to practise these through stimulating topics. Staff seize opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, lunchtimes are extremely pleasant social occasions.
 - The school provides equal opportunities for all pupils by knowing and meeting each individual's particular needs and by checking that no groups are disadvantaged. Through its outreach work and links with mainstream schools, Heatherwood helps to raise awareness of pupils that are disabled or have special educational needs and what they can achieve.
 - Keeping pupils safe is given very high priority. Work with agencies, such as the nursing team based at the school, is extremely valuable in this respect. Staff training is thorough and includes issues that particularly affect disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
 - The parent support adviser is a key source of advice and information to parents. In response to their requests training for example in aromatherapy has been provided. Counselling and social worker drop-in services are offered.
 - The local authority has no concerns about the school and so does not provide an intensive programme of support. Advice is given when requested, for instance, when the school was making changes to the way it tracks pupils' progress.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong and effective and meets statutory duties such as those relating to safeguarding and preventing discrimination. Governors know about the quality of teaching through observing lessons and looking at information about pupils' progress. They fully appreciate the links between the management of teachers' performance and their pay and responsibilities. They are very well informed about the sort of support leaders give teachers to help them improve their work.
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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	135544
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	402714

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Pynegar
Headteacher	Carol Bagshaw
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
Telephone number	01302 322044
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