

Larkrise School

Ashton Street, Trowbridge, BA13 7EB

Inspection dates

20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching is typically good at this school and has improved over time. Some teaching is outstanding.
- Because teaching has improved since the last inspection, nearly all pupils now achieve more and make better progress from their individual starting points.
- School leaders, including the governing body, have put into place good systems for checking the quality of the school's work. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to make the school even better.
- Behaviour at the school is good because pupils are interested in their lessons. In the sixth form, students have designed their own contract which sets out the way they need to behave if they are to learn well.
- The sixth form is good. Teaching is particularly well matched to the needs of all students in the sixth form. They make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives.
- The school works well with parents and carers and with others in the local community, such as further education colleges, to provide rich learning experiences.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough. In a few lessons, teachers do not always make the best use of signing and other communication systems. Resources are sometimes not used as well as they could be to challenge pupils to do as much as possible for themselves.
- In some lessons, the very young pupils spend too much time sitting in their chairs and at tables. Staff do not always make the most of opportunities for learning away from the formal classroom settings.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 14 teachers. This represents almost seven hours spent in class.
- In lessons and in a meeting, pupils discussed their views about their achievements and progress with inspectors, who also listened to their opinions about the school's strengths and weaknesses. One inspector heard pupils read and discussed their chosen books with them.
- Not enough parents and carers completed the Parent View questionnaire but the views of parents and carers were analysed from the school's own survey of parental opinion.
- Key policies and documents were scrutinised and inspectors considered the school's own view of its strengths and areas for development.
- The views of staff were received by means of the staff questionnaire and during feedback following lesson observations. Meetings were held with school leaders, including members of the governing body.
- One inspector met a representative of the local authority to discuss its support of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work completed in files and books by pupils in all classes in the school, including those in the sixth form.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian McAllister

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Larkrise School provides for pupils who have severe learning difficulties. A number of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and others have an autistic spectrum condition.
- Younger pupils in the school tend to have more complex learning needs.
- Pupils come to school from across the county of Wiltshire and all have a statement of educational needs.
- The number of pupils who are entitled to receive support through the pupil premium (which provides funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is higher than the national average.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed. There has also been some rearrangement of the responsibilities of other senior staff.
- The school's building has been improved since the last inspection though space for play, sport and games is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that, in every lesson, teachers make the best use of signing and other supportive communication systems, including new technologies.
- Provide better opportunities for very young children to develop early learning skills away from formal classroom settings.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress at this school from their starting points and there is a trend of continuing improvement. A small number of pupils make such good progress that they are able to gain recognised qualifications in Key Stage 4.
- Students in the sixth form achieve very well in a range of practical, community-based learning programmes. Their successes are recognised in the form of good outcomes in ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) accreditation. As a result, they are well prepared for the next steps of their lives and learning.
- Pupils make good progress with reading and writing. Some can talk enthusiastically about the stories they are reading by describing key events and characters. Their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) improves as they move through the school because teachers pay particular attention to regular practice in their lessons.
- In an outstanding food technology lesson, pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties showed how well they had learned by using switches effectively to operate a food processor. These pupils and others with very complex needs make particularly good progress during their time at school.
- There are no differences between rates of progress amongst different groups at the school. Those who receive the pupil premium, including those known to be entitled to free school meals, achieve as well as others. Boys and girls make similar rates of progress.
- In a very few lessons, pupils are not challenged to achieve as much as they could because they are not asked to use signing or other communication systems and they spend too much time listening to the teacher talking.
- The effort that pupils put into improving their physical skills is clearly seen in well-planned lessons where they are challenged to work hard and keep fit. They respond very well and their successes are recorded in a format which everyone can understand.
- Pupils regularly assess their own work in lessons by discussing with their teachers how much they have achieved and how much help they needed to see the task through.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good because teachers have high expectations of their pupils, based on their close understanding of each individual's needs and strengths.
- In lessons, teachers regularly check on how much progress pupils are making, through their use of well-pitched questions. These stretch the more able pupils and provide effective help for those who need more support. Teachers use pupils' answers to plan the next set of challenges.
- Teachers shape their lessons to build upon pupils' good ideas. A fine example of this was observed in the school's sensory studio, when the teacher built on the imaginative ideas of younger children to tell a story about some animals.
- However, there are occasions when very young children spend too much time seated at tables. This limits opportunities for learning by exploring the classroom and outside area, and not all available resources are used to the very best effect.
- Teachers plan extremely well for pupils who have very complex needs. They have developed a highly effective therapeutic learning programme which weaves together teaching about communication skills, sensory experiences and life skills. Pupils in this programme have learned to relate an object to a piece of music and to concentrate well whilst working with another person.
- Pupils are often organised into small groups in lessons and this makes good use of the support given by teaching assistants. However, where planning is not so successful, too much is done for pupils and they are not encouraged to use signing, or other systems based on new technologies,

to enhance their communication.

- In the sixth form, teachers plan lessons which encourage students to relate classroom learning to what they will find in the wider community. In one lesson, students were learning about safety signs; they responded well by talking about the signs they have noticed when out of school in workplaces or shops and what these mean.
- In almost all subjects, teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' reading, writing and communication skills. In a good music lesson, the teacher used signing effectively to tell pupils what they would be doing, whilst in an excellent PE lesson, pupils counted enthusiastically as they ran in a circle around the hall.
- Teachers provide pupils with instant feedback in lessons on how well they are doing. They mark pupils' files regularly and give them good advice about what they need to do to improve in the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils and staff unite with parents and carers in their belief that their school is as safe as it can be and that instances of bullying of any kind are extremely rare. Others in the local community are very positive about the calm atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils arrive at school in an orderly manner and settle quickly to their lessons. They say that they know who can help them if they feel worried or confused.
- Pupils learn about forming positive relationships with others. Older pupils and students learn well in lessons about sex and relationships and different lifestyles.
- Because teachers and their assistants understand their pupils' needs and strengths so well, they are able to use highly effective personalised rewards to promote positive behaviour and good learning habits. These range from reward stamps on the hand in a PE lesson to having extra time at a favourite activity.
- In almost all lessons, pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and respectful of the needs of others. This helps them to achieve well in lessons and make good progress.
- Good advice is made available about staying safe on the internet. School staff ensure that information is provided in a format which the majority of pupils can read and understand for themselves.
- The seniority of students in the sixth form is acknowledged by means of a '6th Form contract' which each one is invited to sign. This spells out for students what they need to do to make good progress at school and elsewhere.
- On those few occasions where the quality of teaching is not as good as the majority, the attention of some pupils wanders and they are distracted by others. As a result, the pace of learning slows.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and his senior colleagues have worked successfully to drive up standards. The reorganised leadership team ensures that everyone in the school community is aware of what is expected of them and leaders have successfully conveyed a sense of ambition and a desire to do better to all staff.
- With the support of the local authority, school leaders have succeeded in boosting the achievement of pupils because teaching has improved over time.
- School leaders have used resources provided by the pupil premium to provide additional support for those entitled to receive it. Funding has also been used to enrich the range of activities offered to these pupils..

- Systems for checking the quality of the school's work are robust and provide school leaders with useful information on how to raise standards even higher.
 - Better planning in mathematics and English means that the content of lessons is closely matched to the needs of each individual. Building on ideas that work well has created a range of activities which is broad, balanced and provides pupils with rich and memorable experiences in school and elsewhere.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They learn well about different lifestyles. They participate enthusiastically in activities outside of school, including displays of work in the town's arts exhibition and representing their school at a county-wide dance festival.
 - School leaders have ensured that all procedures are in place for keeping everyone safe. Staff and governors are appropriately trained in child protection and safeguarding.
 - Teachers speak highly of opportunities for professional development and training. Performance management procedures have been used effectively to provide support, challenge and training and are linked to priorities in the school improvement plan.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The determination of school governors to play a full role in raising standards at the school has led them to implement successful systems for checking the quality of its work and holding leaders and managers to account. Governors manage the school's budget well. They make effective decisions which support the school's development. They use performance management systems well in comparison to similar schools and they challenge leaders to do even better by ensuring that rewards are closely aligned with the achievement of agreed targets.
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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	126553
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	402404

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	4–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Ham
Headteacher	Mr Phil Cook
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 October 2009
Telephone number	01225 761434
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