

# Colnbrook School

Hayling Road, Watford, WD19 7UY

**Inspection dates** 23–24 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- The school meets fully its vision of 'Working together ... achieving together' and ensures that all pupils are prepared particularly well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points to the end of Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics, as well as in other National Curriculum subjects.
- Pupils' make great strides in improving their communication skills, which supports their outstanding progress in the personal and social development.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress. This gets them ready for learning and eases their move to Year 1.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are highly effective at planning their lessons. They make sure the work is hard enough and always at the right level of difficulty for each pupil. This means that pupils make the best possible progress towards their individual targets.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. This is because of interesting and motivating lessons, together with highly effective support from all adults.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and get on well together. Older pupils appreciate the internet safety lessons they have and say there are always adults to help them, should help be needed.
- The headteacher and his deputy have made sure that there has been a continuous and highly effective focus on maintaining and improving further all aspects of the school's work.
- The experienced Chair of the Governing Body and his governors know the school very well, work very closely with the headteacher and his senior leaders, and are highly effective in their duties.
- As a result of the high quality support offered by the outreach team, mainstream school staff develop their confidence and expertise in supporting their own pupils with learning difficulties.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, taught by 12 different teachers. Five of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- A meeting was held with a group of older pupils. Meetings were also held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, others with posts of responsibility and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector took account of 33 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own recent parent questionnaire and 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its improvement planning, information on pupils' progress, documents used by senior leaders to check the school's work, governing body documentation, and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aileen Thomas

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Previously a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, Colnbrook was re-designated as a school for pupils with learning difficulties, autism and speech and language impairment in 2012. Pupils join the school at different times throughout their school career.
- Currently the large majority of pupils are boys. The large majority are of White British background, with a few of Pakistani or Asian British background. A few are from families where English is not the home language. All pupils have a statement of their special educational needs.
- The school is organised into three planning groups covering Reception to Year 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. The Rainbow class in planning group 1 provides for younger children with complex autism and communication disorders, which supports their integration and inclusion into the main school. A few are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Jigsaw room provides withdrawal support for older children with social and communication needs as well as their learning difficulty.
- The proportion of pupils at Colnbrook eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and children from service families, is above the national average. Currently there are very few in local authority care.
- The school's outreach service provides advice, support and training to local mainstream schools, including training at the school itself.
- The school does not use alternative off-site provision.
- In September 2013, the school achieved Autism accreditation.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop all pupils' independent communication skills through the use of new technologies to make learning even more exciting.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 is low as a result of children's complex needs. Attainment remains below average in all year groups. However, in relation to their starting points, pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make outstanding progress and achieve particularly well in the main school, whatever their abilities.
- At the end of Year 6, almost all pupils usually move to secondary special schools. However, in September 2013, four pupils returned to mainstream schools in Year 7 where they are maintaining their placements.
- High quality support for all pupils means there are no differences in the rates of progress made by those with different levels of learning difficulties, boys and girls, the very few who speak English as an additional language or those supported by pupil premium funding. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and the few looked after by local authorities achieve as well as others. Extra support and resources helps these pupils make outstanding progress.
- Rapid progress is made in the key skills of literacy and numeracy, which are reinforced successfully in all lessons. Consequently, great strides are made in reading, writing and communication skills and in the use of mathematical concepts. Older pupils know how to break down words into sounds to help them read successfully. In addition, pupils make outstanding progress in all other National Curriculum subjects. In physical education, for example, all make significant progress in swimming.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff check carefully the needs and difficulties of children when they arrive. Individual targets are then set for learning and development, and the outstanding progress they make prepares them well for moving on to Year 1.
- In all lessons, progress is consistently good and frequently outstanding. This confirms the school's judgement, which is based on detailed and highly effective checking on how well pupils are doing. In an English lesson, for example, the teacher used visual communication symbols highly effectively to develop pupils' use of adverbs in their writing when recounting Julia Donaldson's 'Tyrannosaurus Drip'.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching throughout the school promotes excellent learning for all pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- Lessons are planned highly effectively to build on previous learning and to provide challenges for the next steps in learning. In a Rainbow class lesson, pupils took turns in identifying number names. The less able were supported by signs by adults and the more able moved on to explore the concepts of one more and one less. The teacher used an interactive display connected to a computer very effectively to support pupils' learning, including having pupils manipulate the images displayed to remove or add them.
- Although teachers use interactive displays highly effectively to support learning, the school recognises that pupils' independent communication skills could be improved further through the use of new 'touch screen' technologies that allow pupils to use and manipulate images on their own screens. This would, the school believes, make learning even more interesting.

- A key strength is how highly effectively all teachers and adults in the room work together to make sure pupils make the best progress possible in relation to their learning needs and targets. This was evident in all lessons. Teaching assistants and other adults know their pupils' needs very well and ensure that all stayed on task throughout. Pupils are asked questions to test their understanding and, most importantly, given time to think before responding. This calm and sensitive approach gives pupils confidence in their learning. The consistent support for developing communication skills, including that from speech and language assistants, supports pupils very well and underpins the outstanding progress they make.
- In a lesson in one of the Jigsaw rooms, the teacher made sure that pupils used full sentences when asking one another if they wanted a piece of fruit or some water during snack time. Pupils were also making excellent progress in developing their personal and social skills.
- A variety of activities also enlivens learning. In a religious education lesson, in preparation for the task of writing an invitation to a Sikh Gurdwara ceremony, pupils watched a DVD presentation showing the first tying of the turban ceremony and the celebration that would follow this. In a role-play, pupils removed their shoes and sat on the classroom floor as if preparing to join the feast. There was an excellent focus throughout on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly pleased with the progress their children are making in lessons, as are the pupils who spoke with the lead inspector.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school because it is a welcoming community with consistent routines. Staff respect pupils' dignity, well-being and their developing independence. Underpinning this are the highly effective relationships between all adults and pupils which result in enjoyable, purposeful and safe learning throughout the whole school day.
- Typically, behaviour over time has been outstanding. Since the last inspection, there have been no recorded instances of racism or homophobia and there have been no instances of bullying. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are extremely rare. There have been no permanent exclusions or instances where pupils are not allowed to go to school for a short time because of poor behaviour.
- Pupils say there is no bullying and have an awareness of the potential dangers associated with the use of the internet. One pupil said that if bullying were to happen the headteacher would deal with it. In addition, pupils said that they really like the use of the school's rewards, particularly the headteacher's award stickers. In all lessons observed during the inspection, there was not one instance where learning was disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils also clearly enjoy the structured time and planned activities provided at morning break and lunch times.
- Persistent absences are very rare. Pupils arrive happily in the morning, remain happy throughout the day and leave happy and contented at the end of the day. Pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive. In lessons, pupils work alone or together in pairs or small groups. In a mathematics lesson, very effective organisation allowed pupils to work as individuals as well as having adult support in small groups.
- Without exception, parents and carers who responded to Parent View and the school's own recent parent questionnaire are happy with the school's care for their children. This was also

confirmed by the responses to the staff questionnaire and by the pupils who met with the lead inspector.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding because of the headteacher's passionate drive and determined ambition. Supported by his senior leaders, this has led to continuing and sustained improvement since the last inspection. All staff are overwhelmingly committed to the school's uncompromising focus on the quality of its provision and pupil progress. All planning groups, including Early Years Foundation Stage, are exceptionally well led.
- Senior leaders check carefully the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. They set clear targets for teachers to improve the quality of their work. At the end of each year, recommendations are made regarding additional responsibilities and training opportunities.
- As a result of the school's unyielding commitment to equality, it ensures there is no discrimination of any kind. All pupils, regardless of circumstances or needs, make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points in their learning and personal development.
- The subjects and topics students study mirror those in mainstream schools but have greater breadth. Because they are tailored to match fully the abilities and individual needs of all pupils, all have equal opportunity to succeed. The strong focus on preparing pupils for the next stage of their education through personal and social education and improvements in communication skills develops their independence. This contributes significantly to pupils' strong all-round personal development, as well as their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school works highly effectively with other professionals both locally (including the outreach service) and across the local authority, as well as with its own team of therapists to support pupils' wide ranging learning needs. It also works closely with parents and carers. This they appreciate, as is evident in their overwhelmingly positive responses to both Parent View and the school's own latest survey.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided minimal support to this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The highly experienced Chair and his Governing Body are supportive of the school, working closely with the headteacher to secure further improvements. Governors undertake specific training to support them in their delegated roles. They recognise the importance of high quality teaching and how this is supporting pupils' outstanding achievements. Governors check the work of the headteacher and other staff, which is helping them to make decisions about how well they are working, any action that needs to be taken, training opportunities and pay. They take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and they ensure that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn.
  - Governors are particularly diligent in making sure that the school's finances are balanced, and in overseeing the use and impact of the pupil premium funding. Current funding is being used to provide extra support to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their circumstances, make the best possible progress in English and mathematics and communication skills. Although the use and potential impact of the funding for the support of primary physical education and school sport has been considered, the school has not yet received its allocation.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117670
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	427150

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bernard Bell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Hill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8428 1281
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