

Mabel Prichard School

Cuddesdon Way, Oxford, OX6 6SB

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is typically good. Some is outstanding and a very small amount requires improvement. Teachers know their pupils well; they plan lessons which capture the interest of every pupil.
- Pupils make good progress and learn well from their earliest days at the school. They enjoy many achievements in classrooms and in the wider community.
- Pupils feel safe and behave very well in school and when they are on visits to shops or places of interest.
- The sixth form is good. Good teaching provides students with many opportunities to practise skills they have learned in the classroom in a number of different locations in the local area and further afield.
- School leaders and managers know their school well. Lesson monitoring helps them to judge how well everyone is doing. Robust performance management systems have led to an increase in the amount of very effective teaching in the school.
- Governors regularly visit the school to meet staff and pupils. They hold school leaders to account by asking precise questions about strengths and weaknesses. They use all available resources efficiently, to drive up standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are not enough opportunities for all middle leaders to visit classrooms to judge the strength of teaching in their subjects.
- When school leaders observe lessons, they do not always provide teachers with enough information about how much impact their teaching has on how well pupils are learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent over five hours in classrooms to observe 11 lessons taught by nine different teachers. In two lessons, they were accompanied by a member of the school leadership team.
- Inspectors joined pupils for lunch to hear their views about the school, their likes and dislikes. One inspector met a group of pupils to talk about their work and another observed pupils in the playground at break time.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information about how school leaders monitor the quality of teaching, how information on pupils' achievements is gathered, minutes of governors' meetings and how the school acts to keep pupils safe.
- In lessons, inspectors heard pupils read and they listened as teachers encouraged pupils to use their communication skills.
- Inspectors took into account the views of members of staff, 31 of whom returned their questionnaire. They also spoke with the school nurse, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- An insufficient number of parents responded to the online Parent View questionnaire for this to be used in the inspection. However, inspectors took into account the views of parents who completed a recent, similar survey of opinion conducted by school leaders.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Boyle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pupils who attend this school have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Each one has a statement of special educational needs. A number of pupils have physical difficulties. A growing proportion of pupils have an autistic spectrum condition.
- The main school site is located alongside a primary school while the secondary department shares a site and some facilities with a mainstream academy.
- Pupils come to the school from the city of Oxford and surrounding areas. Approximately half of all pupils come from backgrounds which are other than White British. The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language at home.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to receive the pupil premium, which provides additional resources for those in the care of the local authority, those who are from families who are in the services or those known to be entitled to receive free school meals, is higher than the national average.
- Many pupils are able to attend clubs and coaching sessions organised by the school, where they are taught by specialist instructors. Pupils play a full role in sporting and cultural activities alongside those who attend mainstream or other special schools.
- The school links with local services and employers to offer work experience and college placements for older students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for subject leaders to monitor teaching of their subjects
 - ensuring that feedback from lesson observations always informs teachers about the impact of their teaching on how well pupils are learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their low starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well in the primary and secondary school classes. Some make good progress with reading because they learn how to blend letters and sounds to form words. Other pupils have learned to use symbols and photographs to gain meaning from books and a variety of written materials. Over time, they do as well as pupils with similar needs in other schools, and they often do better.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly settle into school and enjoy the routines and activities which are available. They learn to work and play alongside their friends and they make good progress during the time they are in the Early Years Foundation Stage class.
- Older pupils gain accreditation for work they have completed through the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) scheme. There is a special emphasis on learning good communication and life skills.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They visit shops, cafes and other amenities to learn about their community. This helps them to prepare well for the next stages of their lives and learning.
- Pupils who are able to are eager to express their opinions, to talk about their aspirations and to describe their favourite activities in school. Other pupils make good use of signs and symbols to have their say.
- Over time, pupils have not made such good progress in science as in English and mathematics. Their teachers noted this and planned a science theme week, during which pupils gained a good understanding of the living things which are in their local and wider environment.
- Year 7 catch-up money has been used creatively to provide drama and dance activities. Pupils have responded so positively that many have become confident performers in local dance competitions and stage performances.
- Resources made available by the pupil premium are used effectively. Eligible pupils are taught in smaller groups and make progress which is as good as and sometimes better than others.
- The availability of primary sport money has led to the employment of professional sports coaches, who organise well-attended clubs and activities. Pupils develop good skills and improve communication and social skills at these clubs. As a result, one pupil was able to talk with great animation about his ambition to become a tennis coach.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and there is more outstanding teaching than there was at the time of the previous inspection.
- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good use of specialist teaching areas such as the soft play room, to encourage pupils to use their burgeoning communication skills and to build physical strength.
- Teaching assistants are clear about what they have to do to support pupils' learning because lessons are well planned. They know what each pupil's target is in a lesson, and what they have to do to help them reach it.
- Pupils show great enjoyment of most of their lessons. In a good dance lesson, pupils reacted enthusiastically when trying out new moves. They took great pleasure in watching members of staff learning the steps at the same time.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and they use this knowledge to shape their lessons so that the needs of all are addressed. In an outstanding science lesson about the human skeleton, one

pupil was able to relate the teaching to an operation to repair a broken bone. The teacher made sure that everyone was included in the learning by challenging more able pupils to record their answers in their work files, while encouraging others to learn about the skeleton by using their senses to look and to feel.

- In a very effective English lesson, pupils used their reading and signing skills to show that they recognised letters and were able to join together the different sounds to form words.
- Pupils' work books and files are regularly marked. In all lessons, teachers provide pupils with good and instant feedback about their successes, and they encourage everyone to join in the celebration of achievements.
- Teachers make good use of questioning to prompt pupils' memories of what they have done in previous lessons. In the sixth form this approach is used to particularly good effect because students are encouraged to reflect on what they did when they were out and about and how this might help them to plan their next visit.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in the school is good. Pupils are polite and courteous and many are keen to talk with and learn about visitors. Their rate of attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now average for special schools.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Bullying of any kind very rarely occurs at this school. School records on behaviour and on safeguarding are thorough. Pupils say that they feel safe and they know who can help them when they are worried.
- Some have learned how to cope with things that annoy them. A younger pupil related how she has learned to move away if she feels upset in noisy situations.
- Parents believe that the school's work to keep children safe is good.
- At break times, staff provide good role models as they demonstrate how to play together and enjoy each other's company. The high level of staffing in the playground ensures that everyone is kept very safe.
- In some lessons, when the pace of teaching dips, pupils lose interest and show some signs of boredom. However, in almost all lessons, pupils work hard and are very positive about what they are learning.
- These positive attitudes are particularly noteworthy when pupils perform on stage. During a lunchtime discussion, some were able to remember what part they had played in a recent school production of Macbeth, recalling facts about the plot.
- The full-time school nurse provides a regular drop-in clinic for pupils who wish to talk with her about any health or other matter about which they are concerned. She also supports teaching about sex and relationships.
- In ICT (information and communication technology) lessons, pupils are taught about staying safe on line. Parents are asked to support this work by signing an internet protocol as part of the home-school agreement.
- The good behaviour seen in class and other areas of the school is also noted when pupils are in the local community. Complimentary remarks are regularly fed back to the school by adults who meet pupils when they are on visits or shopping.

The leadership and management are good

- The systems which school leaders have introduced to monitor the quality of teaching provide them with good information about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

- Governors and school leaders have received training which helps them to ensure that performance management is rigorous. They use the information they gather from appraisal effectively, to advance the careers of highly successful teachers.
- However, feedback to teachers following lesson observations is sometimes too descriptive, and lacks a clear line on what more can be done to improve pupils' learning even further.
- Subject leaders do not have enough opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching in their areas or to provide advice relating to their subject.
- Professional development programmes are used to boost teachers' understanding of specialist techniques, such as working on communication skills or improving the curriculum, most recently in literacy and science.
- School leaders have successfully reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils and students in the sixth form. They ensure that everyone enjoys equal opportunities to make the most of available resources.
- They are successful at conveying their ambitions for pupils. They act quickly to bring about change when it is perceived to be necessary, such as the work currently going on to expand programmes for accreditation for older students to include GCSE or BTEC courses.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. School leaders are determined that their students will do their best and they plan and implement lessons and courses which help students play a role as useful citizens now and in the future. Effective work experience programmes have been introduced to help pupils think about their future lives and what they would like to do.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is well developed. There are strong links with local churches and other faith groups and rich and varied opportunities for pupils to participate in dance, music and performance.
- The local authority provides light-touch support to this school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

As a result of regular monitoring visits governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They question school leaders and other staff effectively at their meetings and make good decisions for the future in consultation with all members of the school community. They have ensured that the school meets all statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe. Governors carefully scrutinise all additional monies made available, such as the pupil premium and sports funding, and they know that these resources are being used to have the intended effect on raising standards.

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	123339
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	432064

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Haywood
Headteacher	Jane Wallington
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 March 2011
Telephone number	01865 777878
Fax number	01865 777218
Email address	jwall9923@ocnmail.net

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