

Springfield/Elms Federation at Bluebell Park

Cawthorne Close, Southdene, Kirkby, L32 2XQ

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The majority of pupils make good progress from their different starting points across all key stages. Some make outstanding progress.
- The sixth form is good. Most students make good progress personally and academically and achieve a good range of qualifications to prepare them for college or other training.
- Teachers are adjusting well to the increase in the numbers of pupils attending the school, and meet the changing needs of pupils. All staff are particularly effective in helping pupils communicate with each other, with adults and with others outside school.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and attend well because they relish coming to school. They behave exceptionally well and are proud of their independence. They listen attentively in class and mix well with all other pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and very secure and their parents agree. Many parents express great appreciation for the excellent care and support their child receives in school.
- Leaders and managers have responded well to the higher expectations of pupils' progress and they have prepared well for the increase in the number of pupils on roll. They have made sure that everything they do has been done with the clear purpose of improving the progress and well-being of pupils. They check carefully what the school is doing well and what still needs to improve. They are vigilant in making sure improvements happen.
- Leaders, managers and governors have continued to improve pupils' achievement by improving teaching. Teaching is of good quality in all areas of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils, particularly the most able pupils, make outstanding progress.
- Targets are not always precise enough to take pupils quickly to the next stage in their learning.
- Leaders' high-quality plans to improve performance, particularly plans to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the school, have not yet had time to have full impact.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 15 teaching sessions or parts of sessions and 15 teachers. The majority of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors and senior leaders looked together at many samples of pupils' work and records of their progress.
- Inspectors talked to a wide range of pupils in class, to groups formally and informally around school, and during a visit to a neighbouring school. An inspector talked on the telephone with a parent, looked at the results of the school's survey of parents' views and took into account the 12 responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents).
- Inspectors also talked to the headteacher, a number of senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three governors, a representative of the local authority, a group of middle leaders and a number of teachers.
- Inspectors also looked carefully at a number of documents relating to school leaders' plans for the future, how leaders work to keep pupils safe and how leaders are working to improve teaching and pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and most show a significant degree of learning difficulty. Many pupils have an additional autistic spectrum condition and, in recent years, pupils' needs have become increasingly severe and complex.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British background and there are more boys than girls in the school.
- Over half the pupils are supported by the pupil premium funding. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupils looked after by the local authority. There is a small minority of pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
- Classes often include pupils of mixed ages.
- The school has a sixth form which provides for students up to the age of 19.
- A range of other professionals who work in the school for some or all of the week include a nursing team, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists.
- The two schools in the federation will combine as one school in September 2014.
- The school works with a range of partners including Sport England, Hope University and Edge Hill University.
- The Inclusion Quality Mark, the Information Communication Technology Mark, the International Schools Award, Comenius and School Games Bronze and Silver Awards have been awarded across the two schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so more pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - ensuring teachers plan tasks and questions that enable all pupils, and particularly the most able, to make rapid progress from their starting points
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to set explicit and precise targets for progress to the next stage in pupils' learning.
- Improve literacy, numeracy and communication across all subjects so pupils increase their progress by:
 - making sure middle leaders responsible for literacy and numeracy check how effectively teachers carry out the actions planned for September 2014 to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
 - ensuring pupils have regular opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All pupils arrive at the school working at standards well below those of most pupils nationally. The majority make good progress from their low starting points. Some make outstanding progress, although the standards they achieve remain below the national average.
- Pupils' skills and knowledge are quickly assessed to find out what they can do and what they need to learn. Pupils work towards goals in their individual learning plans which meet their needs. These include plans for pupils to manage their own behaviour and personal needs wherever possible. As a result, pupils develop a high level of confidence and independence, yet are secure in the knowledge that they can turn to a member of staff for help if needed.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, as a result of the close focus on these skills in specific lessons. However, pupils do not have regular opportunities in lessons to improve these skills, and pupils do not yet make consistently rapid progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding are helped if they fall behind or do not make the progress expected of them by additional teaching or support to improve their behaviour or attendance. The school's routine progress checks are used regularly to find out if all pupils, especially those given additional support and who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are able to reach their targets. As a result, the majority of pupils, including pupils supported by additional funding, make good progress.
- The majority of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make similar progress to other pupils in the school. Their communication skills are well supported by skilled teaching assistants who know the pupils well. Children have frequent opportunities to ask as well as answer questions and to use sentences where possible. They practise their communication skills as they make choices about the equipment they wish to use.
- Detailed records are kept of each pupil's progress throughout the school in various forms such as learning journals, in files and in portfolios of work for accreditation in the sixth form. These show the rate of progress made, but pupils are not always helped to move to the next stage in their learning because the targets set for them are not always sufficiently precise.
- Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 work to improve their skills and knowledge in a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. A Key Stage 3 group enjoyed collecting items in a treasure hunt and all successfully constructed a bar graph to show their collective findings. A sophisticated text was explained well using pictures, symbols and extracts from the story, so that Key Stage 4 pupils could show they understood the complex human issues experienced by the characters in the novel.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well, as a result of the extensive range of well-chosen courses they follow. The qualifications they gain provide evidence that they have achieved against national standards. A proportion move on to college courses when they leave the school, some follow vocational and life skills courses and courses that continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and some move into supported living environments. All demonstrate a high level of self-sufficiency, relative to their skills and abilities.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in sport, as a result of an impressive range of activities in and outside school. The 'Bike Mobility' provision enables all students to learn how to ride a bike and the evening sports club provides particular challenge for pupils talented in sports.
- School leaders are relentless in finding opportunities for all pupils to progress. There is little difference between the achievement and progress of girls and boys, and of students with different starting points. This demonstrates leaders' commitment to promoting an equal opportunity to learn and thrive in this school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils learn well and all make at least good progress over time, as a result of carefully tailored and skilled teaching. A proportion of pupils make outstanding progress, as a result of well-targeted questions and sensitive support. However, some of the most able pupils do the same work as others and are not always challenged effectively. They sometimes wait for others to complete a task before moving on to the next stage and so they do not always achieve as much as they should.
- Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and their concentration is sustained for periods of time by interesting topics and careful questioning. Almost all parents agree that their child is taught well.
- Communication skills develop very effectively. The range of pictures and symbols ensures pupils understand and make choices about what they do. They are supported equally well by teachers and teaching assistants across the school. Signed communication ensures pupils understand what they have achieved and can anticipate the next steps.
- Careful checking of teaching has helped leaders to identify variation in the quality of teaching and leaders and managers have taken steps to reduce inconsistencies. As a result, pupils learn well across all subjects.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are exceptionally positive. Staff use their knowledge of each pupil to tailor teaching to their needs. However, planning is not always effective to meet the needs of the most able pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are increasingly skilled in meeting the needs of the wider range of pupils' more complex needs. They have used training productively to plan teaching and support for each pupil. Where a pupil's needs are exceptional, additional specialist staff skilfully plan individual teaching and support, not only to get the best out of the pupil, but to give the pupil the skills to manage their own behaviour and to decide for themselves when they need help and support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is because any incidents of misbehaviour are directly related to individual identified needs. When these occur, they are skilfully handled in order to bring the individual pupil back to learning quickly. Pupils are confident and relate to each other and to adults and visitors very well. They show respect to teachers and say teachers respect them.
- Classrooms contain well-constructed displays. Artwork in corridors is of a high standard and is treated with respect. Pupils take pride in their work and in their school, and their portfolios of work for accredited courses is of the highest quality the pupils can produce.
- Almost all parents are happy with the standards of behaviour in the school and the vast majority of staff agree with them.
- Additional professionals in the school work closely with school staff to make sure pupils' medical needs are met.
- Pupils attend well and staff take swift action if a pupil is absent without reason. Attendance is above that of special schools nationally and close to the national average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are very aware of the risks pupils will encounter both in and out of school. Day-to-day events and the curriculum, particularly in personal, social and health education lessons, help pupils develop, as far as they are able, the understanding required to sense when they need help and to be thoughtful about where and to whom they go to seek support.
- Pupils have an extensive and impressive range of experiences, such as an art project shared with pupils from a neighbouring, mainstream secondary school. This led to pupils working together with an external company on a 'same or different?' film during which both groups of pupils confirmed they had more in common than they had thought. This significantly developed the social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding of all pupils involved. Pupils in the school

also enjoy residential trips to other schools abroad, and performing arts and sports activities both in and out of school.

- Pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure in the school and thoroughly enjoy lessons and social time. They are very well aware of dangers and risks in using social networks, and in social occasions outside school and were able to say what they would do if they felt uncomfortable in a situation. Pupils accept and value others in the school. They say that bullying is very rare and when it happens it would be swiftly and unobtrusively managed by staff. One boy said 'The way our friends are here, we are all equal.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, leaders, managers and governors have planned the move to include pupils from the second federation school effectively. Senior and middle leaders work closely as teams and share a common vision of the new and larger school. A constant thread throughout the preparation has been 'What will provide the best education, care and support for the pupils?'
- Leaders have an accurate view of what they do well and where improvement is still needed. For example, leaders knew that, in the recent past, the progress of pupils with the lowest levels of ability was slowing as they reached the end of Key Stage 4. The school now provides clear pathways within the curriculum to provide a wider range of curriculum opportunities to develop the independence of this group as they improve their life skills and take part in further work-related learning.
- Targets are set for each teacher linked to raising standards and improving progress and so the quality of teaching continually improves. In addition, a team of middle leaders led by the headteacher and senior staff have worked closely together to plan how best to improve teaching and learning even further. Plans have been put in place to ensure staff take every opportunity for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. However, this initiative is planned to start in full next term and so it has not had impact on current pupils' progress. Hence, progress is currently good rather than outstanding.
- The school regularly assesses and checks on pupils' progress and set targets for pupils to progress further. However, teachers and leaders do not always use the information from assessments carefully enough to set precise targets for the next stage in pupils' learning so pupils can quickly move on to harder work. As a result, some do not always do as well as they should, particularly the most able pupils.
- Almost all parents, both in the school's survey of parents' views, and in responses to the online questionnaire, express full support for the work of the school. There are many instances of individual parents expressing appreciation for the care their child receives and the progress they make.
- The local authority representative knows the school well and agrees that leaders, managers and governors have led the school well in planning for the imminent changes, and in analysing and planning for what needs to improve further.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Risk assessments to support pupils' safety in the learning opportunities they have outside the school are very effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors contribute well to the leadership of the school, particularly in planning for the increase in numbers of pupils. They meet frequently with the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure teachers, including those from the second federation school, are trained and supported to provide good quality teaching. Governors have supported leaders in setting challenging targets for teachers to improve their teaching and lead their teams effectively. Governors ensure that progression along the pay scale is dependent upon staff, including the headteacher, meeting those challenging targets. They understand how middle leaders have planned to improve teaching further in the new term. They know how the pupil premium and sports funding are used to provide extra teaching, additional support and specialised sporting activities. They know there has been general improvement in progress, but are less clear

about how the progress of individual pupils has been improved. They are aware of the school's evaluation of its work and know that some pupils could improve their progress. They manage the school finances well and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust.

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	104495
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	439947

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	141
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Harris
Headteacher	John Parkes
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2009
Telephone number	0151 5491425
Fax number	0151 5468995
Email address	Bluebell.Park@knowsley.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

