

Two Rivers High School

Torc Campus, Silver Link Road, Tamworth, B77 2HJ

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Leaders and governors pursue excellence in every aspect of the school's work. They have maintained high standards and continued to improve the school, particularly in the sixth form, since the last inspection.
- Students of all ages and abilities make outstandingly good progress because teachers are highly skilled at adapting lesson activities to ensure every student succeeds.
- Staff make very effective use of their expert knowledge about students' individual needs and how best to help them learn.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have ensured that teaching has remained outstanding. Rigorous management of staff performance and effective, well-chosen training help to improve teachers' skills even more.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in and around the school are outstanding. They display joy in their learning, feel very safe and are proud to share what they have learned. They say they love school and their teachers are 'the best'.
- The sixth form is excellent. Students are taught extremely well and given exactly the skills they need for the next steps in education and later life.
- Throughout the school the curriculum is exceedingly well matched to students' abilities and interests. A host of clubs at lunchtime and after school enrich their experiences, confidence and talents.
- Students make particularly strong progress in developing their personal and self-help skills. As a result they leave confident in their ability to succeed and are prepared very well indeed for life in modern Britain.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to be even better. They check on its work diligently and are quick to ask about the impact of new initiatives.
- Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school and the ways in which it keeps their children safe. A very few feel that communications with parents could be improved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 29 lessons or parts of lessons, and were accompanied by the executive headteacher or the head of school for almost all of these visits.
- Discussions took place with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior and middle leaders, a representative from the local authority, five members of the governing body, individual parents, and students from all year groups including the sixth form.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and examined information about their progress. They considered the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and its development plan. A range of other documentation was examined, including that relating to safeguarding.
- Fifteen questionnaires completed by staff members were analysed, as were the 13 responses completed by parents on Parent View, the government's website, and the school's own parental survey.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynne Thorogood	Additional Inspector
Lynn Stanbridge	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school for secondary-aged and sixth form students who have moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a quarter have autistic spectrum disorders.
- Many of the students have multiple learning needs. These include specific communication and language difficulties, challenging behaviour, physical difficulties and medical needs. The proportion of students who have the most complex needs is increasing and fewer students with moderate learning difficulties are now admitted. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of students are from Staffordshire and particularly the Tamworth area. A few come from other neighbouring areas such as Derbyshire. All travel to school by taxi or minibus.
- A very high proportion of students, over half, are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- Two Rivers High School is part of a 'hard' federation with Two Rivers Primary School, whose pupils have similar needs. This means that both schools share an executive headteacher, a business manager and a governing body. Some therapy services are also shared.
- Students can stay within the school until the end of Year 14, depending on their needs and readiness for other courses. Year 11 students are taught within the sixth form programmes of study.
- The school previously shared its premises with a provider of work-related courses, which students could also study. This changed in September and the school now runs all of its own provision. It does not use any alternative providers but is negotiating with the local authority to extend its work-related courses to a site in Burntwood in conjunction with two other special schools.
- A nursery for children who have significant special educational needs is also located in the school building. It is managed by the governing body but was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work more closely with parents to ensure that they all:
 - feel listened to and able to share concerns, and understand why the school is suggesting a particular course of action
 - understand how they can help their child further in shaping their targets and next steps in learning, and how to support these at home.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- This is a school in which everyone has high expectations of and ambitions for the students, whatever their level of need or difficulty. The executive headteacher and governing body have ensured that a very able senior leadership team is in place that has created an environment in which students thrive.
- Discrimination of any form is not tolerated. Staff at all levels work extremely well together so that each student's unique learning needs are met, for example, by ensuring that each has the resources and support they need. Despite many having a history of challenging behaviour before arriving at the school, no poor behaviour was observed during the inspection. The school's records show that poor behaviour improves quickly for almost all students after entering the school.
- Leaders in charge of different subjects or year groups and the senior team check rigorously on the work of teachers and teaching assistants, and give high quality feedback on how they could make it even better. Links with other schools, particularly the partner primary school, are used very well to share expertise.
- Staff who are less experienced in working with students with such complex needs are very well supported and trained, so that they quickly adapt. The school employs additional therapy and nurture support to ensure that advice from external specialists such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists can be implemented. This contributes strongly to students' excellent progress in their self-help skills, independence and communication and language. It also helps them to express their emotions and manage their behaviour.
- The curriculum creates clear 'pathways' to achievement for every student, so they leave with mathematics and English skills developed to the highest level possible. It also builds students' life skills and knowledge in other subjects, so they have wide choices about which courses to study when they leave. The school is moving towards a 'modern baccalaureate' that can celebrate all the different aspects of learning that students show. Its new approach to assessment is also linked closely to the qualifications students might take and other targets. Staff use very clear 'stepping stones' to shape tasks for students, and to monitor and record their progress.
- The school involves students very well in reviewing their own progress and in planning for their future. Even where students' needs are more extreme, they make small but highly significant gains in cooperation and communication. Almost all students move on to a college place, and all left to education, employment or training last year. The school has built very close links with the local community and businesses to find work experience placements for students, and ensures they have access to good quality careers advice.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively. Eligible students have additional support for academic courses, access to the many school clubs and visits, and their emotional development. The new 'every child matters' coordinator helps parents to support their children and engage with school even more.
- Students' progress is tracked and analysed meticulously, so that if any is in danger of underachieving their progress and programmes are instantly reviewed and amended. This flexibility means that as students show more confidence and accelerate their progress, they can move onto a higher-level qualification or a different pathway.
- The sixth form is led and managed outstandingly well. Every student has an individualised study programme and the opportunity to take part in an excellent range of personal development activities such as play and sports leader awards. The leaders have dealt with the changes to work-related opportunities on site extremely well so that students still have a host of suitable options.
- Many visits and visitors, music and sporting activities support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. Discussions in lessons and excellent role modelling by staff and older students promote tolerance, respect for others' views and empathy for others extremely well.
- Parents are almost all hugely supportive of the school's work. A very few, however, would like more information about their children's experiences and better communication when they have concerns. The

school is ambitious that even more families should be more actively involved in the life of the school and be supported by it.

- The local authority provides support for self-evaluation but recognises the strengths of this outstanding school. It is working closely with leaders to develop the range of work-related courses offered.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is highly effective. Governors know the school very well because of the quality of reports provided to them by key school staff and because they visit regularly. They know the school's priorities and development plans and check rigorously on these and students' outcomes. This all means that they challenge rigorously and hold leaders and staff to account very well.
- They have an excellent understanding of the work of teachers, including how the management of staff performance links to students' progress.
- They have ensured that the school meets its statutory duties, such as those relating to safeguarding. The school works extremely well with other agencies and with parents to secure students' well-being and ensure they are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They behave extremely well in lessons, really trying their best. Those whose needs mean that they can have challenging outbursts are managed extremely well by teachers and such incidents lessen dramatically over time. This ensures that learning is never disrupted, and any incidents that do occur are very carefully recorded and learned from.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now at least as good as in mainstream schools, despite many students having medical needs. Students are keen to learn, and say that they want to come because their school and their teachers are 'the best'. They take pride in the presentation of their work, even when they find handwriting difficult, and listen carefully in lessons. Some did not attend school regularly until they came to Two Rivers. These students say they attend because they enjoy the learning so much more now and know they are making progress.
- Students generally get on extremely well together. Older students noticeably support and encourage younger ones. The school is a calm and supportive environment in which individual achievements are celebrated and students genuinely cheer each other's triumphs. Music, art and play therapy as well as nurture groups, drama and dance all enable students to express their feelings in different ways, so that they learn to manage difficult emotions effectively.
- Students make many contributions to the local community through their voluntary and charity work and work experience, and this makes them feel valued. They enjoy the challenges such as the Greenpower car they have been highly successful in building and racing, and are proud that they recently finished third in a race with teams from mainstream schools all over England.
- Students feel respected and listened to. They gain in confidence in their studies because the school helps them to achieve things for themselves. For example, the independent travel programme is highly valued by older students, who are proud to talk about where they are going at the weekend. They are very clear, however, about the dangers they might encounter and how best to deal with them.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and staff speak highly of the work of the coordinator to support families and students who may be particularly vulnerable. High quality risk assessments surround all activities, including residential visits such as to Iceland and France. Students are very clear about safety arrangements in subjects such as science and food technology and adhere to these rigidly.
- Students of all ages and abilities demonstrate great care when moving about the school and handling equipment. They show empathy and concern for each other. Students understand about the different

forms of bullying and the ways in which they might occur. All groups interviewed insist that there is no bullying, although sometimes 'we do fall out'. They are confident that if this happens staff will sort it out fairly, and know that sometimes sanctions have to be applied.

- The nurturing atmosphere and the skilful management of behaviour and vigilance of staff mean incidents are rare. Any that do happen are appropriately followed up. Consequently students feel very safe and are able to focus on their learning and enjoyment of school. Parents agree that their children are safe and that the school helps them to understand the dangers they might meet in different contexts very well.
- Students have a good understanding of e-safety and the dangers of social networking sites. Activities such as planning journeys and residential visits help students to become independent and understand potential dangers. Subjects relating to extremism and British values are carefully covered in personal, social and health education lessons, and through subjects such as religious education and history, so that students have a very good understanding of them.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers expertly support the learning of all the students in their class. Staff are highly skilful at managing students' behaviour and motivating them to maintain concentration. They are particularly quick to gain students' interest and enthusiasm at the beginning of lessons, but change and vary the tasks so that students' attention is held throughout.
- Teachers make excellent use of questions to check and probe students' understanding, so that the tasks are reshaped if necessary. This also helps students to improve their expression of their ideas and their explanations.
- Teachers skilfully adapt the difficulty of questions and tasks to ensure that more able students have work that challenges them. They are quick to identify students' talents, whether in English and mathematics, music or art, and areas where they might have been underachieving previously. Rigorous monitoring of progress and effective marking of work ensure that more able students make rapid progress once they have settled into school.
- Students learn and achieve so well because lessons build very carefully on what they already know and can do. Students are proud to share their understandings, for example of the nativity story or the Stuart Kings, but are also keenly interested in finding out more. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subjects they teach and the activities that will be done is infectious and inspires a shared thirst for knowledge.
- Teachers' excellent relationships with students are underpinned by mutual respect and the use of humour. Students are, therefore, keen to please their teachers and rise to the challenges they are set. The sense of fun and enjoyment in lessons is tangible. In a French lesson observed, learning was outstanding. The teacher helped students to recall previous learning, and mutual enjoyment was obvious as students sang a weather song together but also tried very hard to emulate the teacher's expert pronunciation.
- There is a similar strength in the ways in which all staff extend the communication, language and literacy skills of students. Signs, symbols and pictures as well as information technology are all used extremely well to enable students to listen and to understand, but also to share their ideas.
- A whole school focus has improved the teaching of reading and writing, and consequently higher achievement in English. These skills are particularly well supported through different subjects, including PE. A new computerised reading programme checks and consolidates students' skills and they are very highly motivated to use it. A similar focus on mathematical skills across the curriculum this year has also improved students' ability to use and apply the skills they learn in mathematics.
- Teachers make careful notes about students' learning and their feedback, both spoken and in books, make clear to students what they have done well and what they need to do next. Teaching assistants also contribute to these notes and often work very effectively with small groups of students. They make a very strong contribution to students' learning and well-being, and form very effective teams with teachers and

others such as therapists. Students' records show clearly the rigour with which small steps in learning are recognised and celebrated, and lead to much bigger achievements over time.

- All students, including those with additional needs, make such good progress because teachers make the learning meaningful, using real life experiences and contexts that link new learning to what students already know. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully drew ideas about a fair test out of students, when investigating the energy levels linked to different types of crisps. Students were spellbound as he set fire to each, and they could not wait to carry out their research, recording their findings very carefully.
- Teaching in the sixth form is similarly outstanding because of the ways in which each student's programme is personally devised for them and the deep understanding that staff have of students' needs and how to set them up best for next steps.
- Parents agree that their children are taught well. Students themselves say that the teaching is the best thing about the school. They say they make such good progress in their mathematics and English work because of the individual help and encouragement they receive.
- Homework is voluntary but many students and families complete this consistently and value the ways in which learning can be carried over into the home. A few families would like even more information about this.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students' attainment when they enter the school is low, and often very low compared with that expected for their age. Their achievement by the end of Year 11 and by the end of sixth form is outstanding. This is because the school is quick to identify the most important next steps for each student, and the smaller steps that will help them to achieve this.
- No student leaves this school without a qualification. The least able and those with the most complex needs attain a range of awards that recognise their achievements in life skills, English and mathematics. Most students achieve entry level 1, 2 or 3 qualifications in English and mathematics, but also in subjects such as French, biology, performing arts, personal, social and health education and information technology. Initial qualifications are built on steadily from Year 9 onwards so that students in Year 11 and the sixth form have real confidence in their own abilities. They take functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Individuals may also take GCSE courses, for example in biology.
- Students' achievements in other areas are also recognised. For example, they complete Princes Trust awards and Duke of Edinburgh silver and bronze awards. Many students go on to take even higher qualifications in the next phase of their education because their skills have been so well founded at Two Rivers. For example, former students have successfully reached degree levels. Others take level 1 and level 2 GCSE qualifications or their equivalent, or build on the skills they have learned in engineering to secure places on courses or even apprenticeships.
- Students' progress accelerates as they settle into the school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning improve. Students in Key Stage 3 say they do so well in reading and writing because of the individual help they receive. They read out loud confidently. Literacy skills are also improving because of the ways in which all staff now promote students' ability to blend letter sounds to make words (phonics). A very high proportion of students were non-readers when they entered the school, but the majority are now able to start a reading and spelling test, some having made remarkable progress.
- More able students make outstanding progress. Those in Year 11 and the sixth form are articulate and read simple texts with expression. They were seen debating what should be in a CV (curriculum vitae) with enthusiasm. Younger more able students discussed thoughtfully how their work might be improved, and responded to their teacher's marking by extending their sentences and using connectives.
- Students who have the most complex needs may initially need physical prompts to respond to their teachers. They develop the ability to respond to a symbol or verbal prompt and to anticipate what comes next in a familiar story, song or routine.

- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as the others in the school. The funding is used very well to provide extra support and therapy so that students are ready to learn. It also enables them to take part in a range of additional activities that support their learning and emotional development. This means that they engage much more readily with tasks and their learning accelerates.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students' achievement in the sixth form is outstanding because of outstanding leadership and teaching, and the very high quality experiences provided. Almost all students leave the school with higher qualifications than they had on entry to the sixth form. Those with the most complex needs have a broader range of qualifications that are cause for celebration.
- More able students leave with Level 1 Functional Skills qualifications and individuals achieve GCSEs, for example in science or mathematics. Students in Year 11 join the sixth form and groups are mixed according to their studies. Most stay until the end of Year 13, but occasionally they leave earlier and a small number who are not ready to transfer to other colleges stay on into Year 14. This ensures that students build confidence and skills in the courses they are studying and can move on when their achievements are secure. As a result students complete their courses at Two Rivers and in their next placements.
- A particular strength of the sixth form is the way in which staff have high expectations about students' behaviour and achievement, and how well students rise to them. Staff are very experienced in helping students to make their own decisions. For example, one student was given just enough help to move their writing on by being encouraged to think about the work in a certain way rather than just being told what to do. As a result the student could explain why what they had improved was better.
- Leaders have ensured that changes in the arrangements for work-related courses have been beneficial. For example, students are now more involved in the community and their individual targets are more consistently supported.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They are excellent role models for younger students. They demonstrate a tolerance and respect for each other and an appreciation of the need to help younger students to understand why good behaviour and keeping safe are important.
- Students are given highly effective emotional and personal support as they try to plan forward for the next steps in their life. Issues such as life in modern Britain, the dangers of drugs and alcohol and tolerance for different faiths are explored extremely well. Students demonstrate high levels of confidence and competence in researching topics by themselves. This promotes very well the skills they will need in their next stage of education and life.

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	124513
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	448125

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Shaw
Headteacher	Anthony Dooley
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2009
Telephone number	01827 475690
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