

# Heatherwood School

Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6HQ

## Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The senior leaders and governors have an exceptionally strong vision for the school. They focus on ensuring that teaching and learning are the very best they can be; and that they are partnered by outstanding care and guidance.
- Senior leaders have brought about much improvement since the previous inspection and show the determination for this to continue. For example, their quest to develop a system to check in detail on pupils' progress has led them to visit schools up and down the country to seek good practice. Their perseverance has paid off and their newly developed system is highly effective.
- Although several governors are new to their posts, they already know the school well. They offer highly informed and relentless challenge to senior leaders, but are also rightfully proud of the school's achievements.
- The curriculum is very well honed to meet the needs of individual pupils. Trips away from school enrich pupils' experiences and enable them to gain a better understanding of the world around them. After-school clubs offer them a wealth of opportunities to enjoy their favourite activities outside school time.
- Middle leaders share senior leaders' passion for the school and play an important role in school improvement.
- Staff meticulously plan work for individual pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to ensure that pupils make as much progress as possible. The development of pupils' communication skills and independence is a key priority for all staff and pupils make great gains in both these areas.
- Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school and feel that staff always go the extra mile to support the needs of their children. Parents feel staff are approachable, caring and know their children well.
- Children who start in the early years unit make exceptionally good progress from their different starting points. Staff are very skilled at recognising their needs and check the small steps of progress they make with scrupulous care.
- Students who attend the school's post-16 provision make good progress, but on occasion the work set for them is not well matched to their needs.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning of post-16 students to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that work set meets the needs of pupils accurately in order to maximise progress made
  - increasing the number of checks made by senior leaders on the quality of teaching and learning in the post-16 provision to accelerate improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are very focused and seek continuous improvement, as shown by the changes in the school since the previous inspection. Their unwavering belief in pupils' ability to make outstanding progress when the circumstances are right has been a key catalyst to developing the curriculum and to promoting pupils' communication skills, as well as their independence as learners.
- School leaders recognise that the unique and high levels of need of many of their pupils require very expert teaching to help them make progress. To this end, leaders have given staff opportunities to visit other schools in the locality and beyond to see good practice. Their newly gained knowledge and experiences have been used to excellent effect in further improvement across the school.
- The role of middle leadership has grown and developed since the previous inspection. Middle leaders now take a leading role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Their work has included training support staff to work directly with pupils towards the targets that have been set for them and to report back knowledgeably and accurately. The impact of this work was clearly observable in classrooms across the school and was reflected in the high-quality questioning skills of teaching assistants.
- Because of the very high levels of need of pupils who attend the school, leaders and staff work directly with the on-site nursing and children's therapy teams. This very close working partnership is much appreciated by parents. Many instances of the excellent impact of this multidisciplinary approach were evident during the inspection. For example, communication sessions are timetabled across the school in order to promote pupils' speech and language skills. Speech and language therapists contribute directly to the content of these sessions and the effectiveness of this partnership is clearly reflected in the excellent gains made by pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used carefully and creatively to support the learning needs of all disadvantaged pupils. As a result, any difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils has diminished. This ensures that all groups make very strong progress across the school.
- The performance of all staff is very closely linked to school improvement. Targets set for teachers are carefully crafted to meet their own needs as well as those of the school, for example the performance management target to develop a better understanding of the impact on pupils' learning of different medical conditions. This posed a challenge for staff and directly benefited outcomes for pupils.
- The curriculum enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills and is closely tailored to their needs. Literacy is taught often through communication lessons which incorporate targets set by speech and language therapists. Mathematics, alongside other subjects, is taught through ongoing whole-school topics such as 'food' and 'celebrations'. Music is taught across the school in a variety of different ways. Pupils spoken to during the inspection indicated their love of music lessons by their smiles and gestures.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successfully promoted in a

range of ways. 'Kind hands and kind gestures' are the expectation for all. Pupils' diligent approach to learning and to fundraising for others demonstrates clearly the effectiveness of the school's preparation of its pupils for life in modern Britain.

### **Governance of the school**

- Despite being a relatively newly formed governing body, governors feel they have hit the ground running. They are exceptionally knowledgeable and empathetic to the needs of pupils.
- Their frequent visits have enabled them to gain an extremely clear picture of the school. From these visits they have already formed a view of the key areas of challenge for senior leaders.
- Governors are thoughtful in their approach to their roles and responsibilities. They are keen to get their own first-hand knowledge of the school. For example, one governor has carried out research on pupil premium funding. As a consequence, governors have a very strong understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of school spending, including funding for disadvantaged pupils and the additional funding attached to pupils because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that the school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding. This includes ensuring that robust checks are carried out on all adults to ensure their suitability to work with children. These are recorded in well-organised staff files.
- The deputy headteacher as safeguarding lead is very knowledgeable about the needs of pupils in the school. Working with other staff, he has created a very strong culture of safeguarding within school. All staff are aware that keeping children safe is the responsibility of everyone.
- All staff receive regular and relevant training. As a result, staff are very diligent at recording safeguarding concerns and have a very clear knowledge and understanding of the latest government guidance

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Outstanding**

- Staff at all levels work very closely together to meet the needs of all pupils. They focus on making sure learning starts as soon as pupils arrive in the classroom, using time effectively and ensuring a seamless transition from home to school.
- Staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils they teach. They have drawn on recent training on the educational impact of a range of different medical conditions to influence their practice. This has given them greater confidence in the range of approaches they take to meeting pupils' needs.
- Teaching staff share the vision and exceptionally high expectations of senior leaders. They agree that there has been a 'quiet revolution', with the school's already strong emphasis on care being built on to ensure that pupils learn well and make rapid progress.

- A key focus in pupils' learning is the development of their ability to work independently as far as possible. Staff challenge them to overcome their lack of self-belief and develop confidence and a 'can do attitude'. Their focus on turning 'barriers into hurdles' is impressive and is reflected in the dogged determination shown by pupils to learn new things.
- Teachers' high expectations of what each individual can achieve is seen in their bespoke approach to learning. For example, pupils with a very wide range of abilities were observed in a literacy session undertaking tasks across a wide range of difficulty, from responding to different sounds to using a computer to record their description of snow. This enabled each pupil to make as much progress as possible in their writing.
- The quality of pupils' work is skilfully assessed. Feedback to pupils is usually undertaken as a whole class and is couched in positive terms, with success celebrated by all. Pupils' delight at this was very clearly observed in lessons where pupils completed a 'lap of honour' around the classroom for success with spelling.
- Staff are very skilled at asking questions which help pupils to learn. They use questioning well as one of their strategies to help pupils develop their independence. Discussions with parents during the inspection confirmed the success of this strategy. Parents made comments such as: 'I really never thought my child would ever be able to do some of the things staff here have him doing regularly; and they have taught us how to help him to do them at home too.'
- In line with recommendations made in the previous inspection report, more-able pupils are taught phonics. Some children are taught whole words in order to help them to recognise words in simple readers. Due to pupils' very high levels of need, few are able to gain the skills necessary to read fluently with understanding. However, those that are able to make that transition are given excellent levels of support and guidance to maximise their progress

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are at the heart of all that school does. Leaders and staff are united in their efforts to ensure that pupils enjoy school and make as much progress as possible.
- This is clearly demonstrated in school's 'can do' approach to learning, which aims to give pupils every opportunity to develop to their full potential. Staff refuse to see pupils' high levels of needs as barriers to their learning, preferring to call them 'hurdles' which can be overcome. This approach enables pupils to succeed and make outstanding gains socially, emotionally and academically.
- Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. Their smiling faces as they arrive in the morning show the very strong relationships and trust that they have built up with staff.
- Pupils enjoy a wide variety of different experiences whilst at school. All are regarded by staff as opportunities to learn. For example, the school Christmas lunch was prepared and served on the second day of the inspection. Pupils of all ages and staff sat down

together. Despite the very high levels of excitement and delight as pupils sat with their friends, their behaviour remained excellent. Pupils demonstrated the social skills modelled by staff and actively participated in congratulating the achievement of others.

- Parents trust staff and know that their children are safe and very well cared for when they come to school. This is something which parents spoken to said they value the most. For example, the school has developed the forget-me-not garden, a quiet, safe place where family, staff and pupils can come to reflect.
- Staff are extremely mindful that many pupils are vulnerable. They work very hard to develop strong relationships with parents in order to be able to support and share with them any issues as they arise. Parents commented on the school's ever-open door, which enables them to feel that they can talk to staff about concerns at any time.
- Staff at school work very closely with a range of organisations, including the on-site medical team of nurses. Discussions with a member of this team during the inspection showed high levels of confidence in the staff, who consult when necessary and listen to nurses' views and are skilled at meeting pupils' personal care and welfare needs

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding because all staff follow the behaviour management policy and pupils therefore know exactly what is expected.
- Staff record all incidents of difficult behaviour, whether consciously carried out or a reaction to a situation. This enables staff to monitor behaviour over time and to recognise patterns or triggers which can then be avoided.
- Pupils overall are very happy and feel safe. Not all are able to articulate their feelings directly. However, because staff know pupils so very well, they are able to recognise the very smallest nuances in pupils' behaviour, which reflect their feelings.
- Parents also believe their children are happy, safe and very well cared for at school. A comment made by one reflected the views of others.
- Attendance continues to rise. This year attendance is considerably higher than at the same time last year. However, many pupils have associated medical problems which cause them to spend protracted periods of time in hospital. School leaders are aware of the impact this has on pupils' progress and work hard with parents and the healthcare team to ensure that they return to school as soon as possible.
- Close links forged by school with other professionals during this time enable pupils to remain in touch with friends and to reduce the effect of their absence on their progress

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Outstanding**

- Pupils who attend Heatherwood School have a wide range of different needs and starting points. School data shows that pupils from all groups are making very strong progress from their starting points. This is reflected in the work seen in classrooms and in the written work produced by the very small numbers of more-able pupils.
- A very small number of more-able pupils learn to read by effectively using the phonics skills they have learned. Less-able pupils enjoy stories read by others and respond to different stimuli in books. Very occasionally, reading materials are not matched

sufficiently closely to the age of pupils. However, this is infrequent and when it occurs it is often a choice made by the pupil.

- Pupils learn and practise mathematical skills through other subjects. For example, some pupils making mince pies for Christmas dinner weighed out the ingredients with the help of staff, thus gaining a simple understanding of numbers on the scales. Others explored the texture and taste of the ingredients in line with their abilities.
- Disadvantaged pupils make equally strong progress over time from a wide range of starting points. Staff have a very clear understanding of pupils' needs and continue to stretch pupils' knowledge and develop their skills by setting challenging targets. For example, a small group of older more-able pupils were given the task of describing snow in as many ways as possible. Their initial response was to suggest simple words such as 'white' and 'cold'. Staff working with them supported their efforts but challenged them to keep on trying until they successfully devised sentences which described snow in 10 different ways, reaching the demanding target set for them. Their pleasure in their success was clear by their radiant smiles.

### **Early years provision**

### **Outstanding**

- Children join the early years unit with a very broad range of abilities and needs. They quickly settle into the highly nurturing environment. The very high staffing levels within the unit ensure that children are given individual attention and follow a curriculum designed to assess their personal needs.
- Staff work closely with members of the care team in order to ensure a smooth transfer between home and school. Parents spoke very highly of the effectiveness of this process in helping their children to settle, and said that the close team work between health and education staff had reassured them and allayed any concerns completely. For example, a parent commented on how both school staff and the medical team had very closely supported her in developing an appropriate feeding regime for her child, developing her confidence and supporting her 'at every turn'.
- Children are offered a wide range of activities to play and learn, both individually and in groups. Visits to the school's soft play area ensure that they have excellent opportunity to move and play freely within the constraints of their medical conditions.
- Staff follow the early years curriculum as closely as possible and ensure that children learn through experiencing a wide range of different activities. All learning is tailored to the individual needs of children. For example, when the weather allows, children use the very well-equipped outdoor provision and experience playing with a wide range of materials. During winter weather, some equipment normally used outdoors is brought inside in order for learning to continue.
- While children's progress is measured against national expectations, as is required at the end of each year, very few achieve the early learning goals. However, school data shows that they make excellent progress from their starting points in the very small steps that they take.
- Because staff are well trained, knowledgeable and diligent, all welfare requirements are met



## 16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Provision and the outcomes for students on post-16 study programmes are good. Staff understand the needs of students well. They work hard and successfully develop in students skills which will help them to become as independent as possible, for example developing the skills to drive and navigate their electric wheelchairs safely around the corridors and to make choices of what to eat when.
- Provision has been changed this year in order to prepare students more effectively for their future. Leaders have endeavoured to ensure that students have an opportunity to experience a variety of different workplaces. However, the implementation of these ambitious plans has been slower than expected.
- The curriculum offers students a range of opportunities, including experiences beyond school. For example, a recent highly successful residential trip to an outdoor pursuits centre provided students with activities that some parents thought were beyond their dreams and expectations for their children. Photographs of the trip demonstrated that the very careful planning had enabled students to experience a very wide range of ambitious activities, from using a zip wire to rock climbing.
- Such experiences enable students to gain a greater understanding of the wider world and make an excellent contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as developing their independence skills.
- Plans are in place to start a work experience programme for post-16 pupils next term. This will enable pupils to experience the world of work in a secure environment and is designed to prepare them for their next steps in life.
- Post-16 provision is not yet outstanding because the curriculum delivered does not match the needs of students as accurately as in other areas of the school. Planning for learning is not as strong as it could be and this slows students' progress. School data confirms this.



## School details

Unique reference number	135544
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10012578

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	All-through special school
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Bullock
Headteacher	Lisa Suter
Telephone number	01302 322044
Website	<a href="http://www.heatherwood.doncaster.sch.uk">www.heatherwood.doncaster.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@heatherwood.doncaster.sch.uk">admin@heatherwood.doncaster.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school caters for up to 60 pupils, all of whom have education, health and care plans or statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The vast majority have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A smaller number have severe learning difficulties.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The school provides part-time education for children in the Nursery and full-time education for those who attend the Reception class.
- The school has a small post-16 unit which caters for the needs of students aged between 16 and 19.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in all classes across the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, three members of the governing body, pupils, four parents and a member of the on-site nursing team
- The inspection team analysed a range of documents, including safeguarding and health and safety documents, pupils' work, curriculum documentation, the school's evaluation of its own performance and data which measured pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents and pupils as well as the views of 26 staff who completed a paper questionnaire based on the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Judith James

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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