

# White Spire School

Rickley Lane, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK3 6EW

## Inspection dates

22–23 January 2019

<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>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- This is an outstanding school. Leaders and governors are uncompromising in their drive to deliver the very best education for all pupils. They have a clear vision for the continuing improvement of the school.
- Governors provide excellent support and challenge to senior leaders. They are highly analytical and ensure that there is a clear, strategic direction for the school.
- The social and personal development of pupils is exceptional. Pupils are very well cared for. There is a sharp focus on improving pupils' lives and aspirations. Many parents said that their child has been 'transformed' since attending this school. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence improve rapidly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective. The well-planned curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also develop skills in subjects such as enterprise and employability.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Behaviour across the school is exemplary. New pupils quickly learn to adopt the 'White Spire way'.
- Teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Teachers assess pupils' starting points precisely. Lessons are planned meticulously to ensure that pupils have exactly the right level of work. Staff set ambitious targets to ensure that every pupil makes exceptional progress. Pupils leave school with a range of nationally recognised qualifications.
- Post-16 students make excellent progress. They receive first-rate careers advice and guidance. In the last two years, all students have moved from post-16 into further education, employment or training.
- The school works with some other schools locally but this is relatively limited and does not enable the school to plan fully so as to meet emerging requirements in the area even better.

## **Full report**

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

- Extend the school's engagement with local schools so that this school can become more aware of the emerging requirements of the local pupil population.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher, supported by a highly efficient leadership team, has the highest aspirations for all pupils. All staff share a common aim, which is to provide the very best standard of education. They work hard to ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives.
- The headteacher strives to continually improve the school. Leaders check regularly on the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are held fully accountable for the progress that pupils make.
- Staff work closely together to evaluate what is working well and what could be further improved. All staff who answered the Ofsted staff questionnaire agree that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated and effective teaching team.
- Middle leaders fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. They are very knowledgeable about the subjects that they lead. The quality of advice and guidance they provide to teachers is exceptional.
- Parents are effusive in their praise of the school. Those who spoke to the inspectors, or who responded to the Ofsted survey, would recommend this school wholeheartedly to other parents. Expressing the views of many parents, one parent said: 'The headteacher and his dedicated team of professionals do an amazing job, helping each and every student to believe in themselves by supporting them all individually with their specific needs. The teaching and pastoral care is outstanding and my daughter has made unbelievable progress.'
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Each pupil has access to a wealth of experience that develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils take part in many engaging activities. For example, during the recent celebration of the Hindu festival of colours, Holi, pupils donned protective clothing and threw coloured powders at their classmates. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values, including the principles of democracy.
- The school provides a range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities. It is a registered provider of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and many pupils enjoy taking part in the bronze and silver awards. The school's outside area is very well planned and is used to extend the curriculum. Some pupils make good use of the outdoor gym and others enjoy growing vegetables in the gardening area.
- Leaders spend the government's additional funding wisely. They consider carefully the extra support needed by individuals who are eligible for the pupil premium. As a result, these pupils make excellent progress. Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is equally well spent. The school has used the primary physical education and sport premium to broaden the range of sporting opportunities provided. Pupils now take part in numerous competitions, including tag rugby and football.
- The school offers placements to trainee teachers who attend the University of Buckingham. There are also links with other institutions. However, leaders recognise that their external engagement with other schools locally is not fully developed to enable them to be sure they are planning well for emerging needs, or developing their

work to take advantage of other local partnership working.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors have high aspirations for all pupils. Minutes of meetings show that they provide robust challenge to leaders. Governors have an excellent understanding about the performance of the school. They ensure that additional funding is well spent.
- Governors support the headteacher's plans to improve the school even further. They have a secure understanding of the school's strategic direction.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are uncompromising in their determination to keep pupils safe. They receive regular training to ensure that they are always alert to potential issues. Staff work closely with other agencies to support and strengthen the well-being of all pupils.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe and look after themselves in a variety of situations. Pupils know about the potential dangers associated with the internet. They explained that, online, some people who claim to be their age are in fact adults. Pupils know about the risks associated with social media. They have a clear understanding about the concept of having a 'digital footprint' where their use, for example, of social media is hard to erase.

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

## **Outstanding**

- Staff build strong relationships with pupils. They have an excellent understanding of each pupil's social and academic needs. Staff work closely with therapists, such as speech and language therapists, and other agencies to ensure that pupils always receive the best support.
- Staff carry out accurate baseline assessments of pupils' skills and abilities at the beginning of each year. They make sure that pupils are making the best possible progress. Activities are planned meticulously and build carefully on pupils' prior learning.
- All staff who answered the Ofsted questionnaire are proud to work at this school. They all agree that it is an aspirational school. Staff are not complacent; they regularly work alongside each other to identify how they can keep on improving. Recently, for example, staff worked together to develop some inspiring learning environments.
- Parents say that the teachers at this school are very supportive. A typical comment from a parent, stated: 'I cannot stress enough just how fantastic White Spire School is, and how well staff cater for my child's needs and her learning disabilities. The teachers are absolute stars and we are just so thankful to them.'
- The development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills is excellent. The learning tasks provided are both relevant and interesting to pupils. As an example, for reading, careful phonics teaching ensures that pupils make a strong start in the development of their early reading accuracy skills.

- Highly skilled teaching across the school ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- 'Transformed' was the word used most by parents to describe the personal development of their child, since starting at this school. Staff are highly effective in developing pupils' self-belief. They build pupils' confidence to try new experiences. As one parent said: 'My child has grown in confidence, self-esteem and ability. Stress and anxiety levels are dramatically reduced and he now feels a sense of worth and belonging.'
- Staff are very successful in developing pupils' independence. Older pupils, for example, go on a variety of carefully overseen orientation visits, including travel training. This increases pupils' skills and confidence so that they can safely get themselves to college or a place of work.
- Pupils care for each other. They say that any form of bullying is rare, but that they would talk to a member of staff if they ever had any concerns or worries about their friends.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff have very high expectations about pupils' behaviour. Pupils who are new to the school and have difficulties with managing their behaviour are gently helped to understand the 'White Spire way'. Pupils know that staff at this school have their best interests at heart.
- Behaviour is exemplary around the school. Older pupils provide positive role models for those who are younger. In lessons, pupils demonstrate a thirst for learning and show great delight when they learn a new skill. Pupils work very well together. This was seen in a food-technology class, where pupils cooperated together when making and serving some vegan haggis.
- The great majority of pupils are keen to attend. Fixed-term exclusions are very rare. There have been no permanent exclusions.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Outstanding**

- Pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points. This is because the curriculum is so well adapted to pupils' needs.
- The work for pupils in each lesson is meticulously planned. This is to ensure that pupils have exactly the right level of challenge to stretch their abilities. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress in developing their skills in reading, writing and

mathematics.

- The school works very successfully with pupils who have speech, language and communication needs. Staff, working closely with speech and language therapists, have helped some pupils who were not able to speak to talk freely.
- The school's very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others. This is due to effective teaching and careful use of the pupil premium. Most-able pupils make strong progress because they are always appropriately challenged in their learning.
- As they move through the school, pupils work towards a range of accreditations that are suited to their needs and future plans. Pupils recognise the positive effects of leaving school with certificates that mark their achievements. They gain accreditations from Entry Level to Level 1 in many subjects, including hospitality and catering. In hair and beauty, pupils develop strong skills in styling hair. In construction, pupils make excellent progress in developing their carpentry skills and put these to good effect, making sheds for the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by providing a highly effective careers advice and guidance programme.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Outstanding

- Post-16 students make excellent progress, including in the further development of their English and mathematics skills. This is because of the high-quality teaching and personalised support they receive. Students leave the school with a range of accreditations up to Level 1. In the last two years, all students have moved on to further education, employment or training.
- Strong leadership has built a culture of high expectations. Leaders have a very clear purpose, which is to ensure that students are well equipped for their future lives. Study programmes offer students many useful opportunities, such as developing their enterprise skills. One example of this is the café that students have recently set up, called 'The Daily Grind'. Students buy the provisions, organise the promotional materials and manage the cash flow.
- The personal development of students is excellent. The school provides a safe, familiar and caring environment for students to start planning their futures. The very great majority of students complete their courses. There are frequent visits to the local community, where students strengthen their social and independent living skills. Students act as excellent role models for the younger pupils when they are around the school.
- Students receive first-rate careers advice and guidance. Work experience and work-related learning makes a strong contribution to each student's programme of study. Some of their placements lead to offers of employment. Students often transition to further learning courses at college, for example in catering and retail.

## School details

Unique reference number	110575
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10058117

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	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Griffiths
Headteacher	Finlay Douglas
Telephone number	01908 373266
Website	<a href="http://www.whitespireschool.org.uk">www.whitespireschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@whitespire.milton-keynes.sch.uk">admin@whitespire.milton-keynes.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

## Information about this school

- White Spire School provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. However, an increasing percentage of pupils have additional needs associated with: autism spectrum disorder; speech, language and communication needs; or sensory and/or physical needs. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- Around half of the pupils meet the criteria for pupil premium as a result of being looked after or eligible for free school meals. This is above the national average.
- The school works in partnership with a range of external agencies, including speech and language therapists, health and social care professionals and paediatricians.

- Since the school's last inspection, in 2014, pupils are now admitted into Year 1.
- The school does not place any pupils in alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Many observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of staff, governors and the local authority's representative. Inspectors also considered 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their experience of school. They examined pupils' work in their books and listened to some pupils read.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed, relating to safeguarding, assessment, target-setting and pupils' progress. The inspectors checked the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- There were informal discussions with parents. Inspectors took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 18 free-text comments.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Greenhalgh	Ofsted Inspector

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