

Coppice School

Abbots Way, Westlands, Newcastle, ST5 2EY

Inspection dates 12-13 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The achievement of students and the progress they make from their individual starting points is good. A high proportion of students make progress better than that found nationally.
- Teachers have high expectations and because they know each of their students so well they meet individual needs and help them reach their full potential.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Particularly impressive is the way that students help and support each other, in lessons and generally around school.
- Safety is also outstanding. Students, parents and carers emphasise strongly that school is a safe place. Great care is taken to make sure that around the school and when students go out on trips and visits they are kept safe.
- Senior leaders have a strong vision and total commitment to a school that is focused on making sure that its students do well, enjoy their learning and are successful when they leave.
- The sixth form is good and offers effective support to students as they prepare for the next stage in their life after school.
- With a strong emphasis on training, leaders and managers have made sure that staff have many opportunities to develop their expertise. In turn this has led to the school improving, rising standards and students making better progress.
- Governors play a strong and effective role in school life, playing an important part in driving school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally marking does not help students understand how their work could be even better, or support them in reaching their demanding learning targets.
- The roles of key subject leaders and the head of the sixth form are not fully developed, limiting their overall impact in helping to raise standards.

Information about this inspection

- A total of 12 lessons were observed, seven of them jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and her deputy at Coppice School, other staff with specific areas of responsibility, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of parents were gathered from the most recent of the school's annual survey of parental opinion undertaken in December 2013. Responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View, were too few to trigger an analysis of their views.
- The views of students were gathered by a meeting with members of the school council and from talking to as many as possible throughout the inspection.
- Staff views as expressed in their questionnaire returns and in discussions throughout the inspection were also taken into account.
- The inspectors looked at the work of students during lesson observations and undertook a more detailed review of a representative sample of work from across the school. They listened to some students read to them.
- A range of written evidence was looked at, including detailed information on the progress of students, teachers' planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Bray

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Coppice is a special school for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties and, increasingly, more complex needs that include rising numbers of students with an autistic spectrum disorder.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Nearly all are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups that include those known to be eligible for free school meals, or those in the care of the local authority) is well above average.
- The additional government grant in Year 7 to provide additional support for students who had failed to reach expected standards at the end of Year 6 is not identified specifically in special schools' budgets by the local authority, since it would apply to all students. Its specific impact cannot therefore be measured.
- Since April 2009 the school has been federated with Blackfriars School, another local day special school, under a single governing body and an executive headteacher. Each of the schools in the federation has its own head of school.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader of Education and supports other schools that have been identified as requiring additional help.
- The expertise available at Coppice is also shared with some local mainstream schools and this enables those schools to provide more effective support for some of their students with special educational needs.
- There are strong links with local university departments of education, including the University of Keele, where federation leaders contribute to the teacher training programme.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the marking of students' work contains not only praise for their achievements but also support for how it might be improved and advice on what students have to do in order to reach their demanding learning targets.
- Develop the role of key subject leaders and the head of the sixth form so that they play a fuller role in school improvement at Coppice and across the wider federation through checking teaching, sharing best practice with other staff and leading opportunities for staff development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- While the attainment of students will always be low because of wider learning difficulties, they make good, sometimes outstanding, progress from individual starting points. Measured against the government's figures for special schools a high proportion of students are making progress that exceeds national expectations in English and mathematics.
- Equally important in many cases is the excellent progress pupils make in developing communication skills. For students with an autistic spectrum disorder this is of particular importance and the high quality provision for this group supports their development over time.
- The progress of each student is measured termly and the information used to set demanding learning targets. However, despite detailed information made available to staff on the progress of every student, on rare occasions teachers do not give students work that stretches them.
- Termly progress meetings between teachers and senior leaders focus on the achievement of every student. These meetings increase the level of difficulty of work if progress speeds up, or put additional support in place when progress is less than expected. This specific analysis of individual needs helps students to do their very best.
- The most able are supported well because their needs are identified, and as a result they follow programmes that result in them gaining external qualifications at a higher level, such as that offered by BTEC.
- The careful targeting of pupil-premium funding is focused on increasing staffing to provide specific support in English or mathematics. Progress is measured very carefully and shows that those students who benefit make excellent progress, at least matching that of other students in both subjects in a school where all are encouraged to make rapid progress.
- The teaching of reading is a priority and a regular part of school life. For those still developing basic reading skills there is effective support through the good use of phonics (understanding letters and the sounds they make). Over time students become increasingly confident readers.
- Sometimes published information about the school looks as though students have not made enough progress, but this is not the case. For example, outcomes for Year 11 as a group in 2013 were lower, but this group contained some students that had not joined the school until Year 10 after years of failing in mainstream schools. Once at Coppice they started to make good progress, but by the time they got to the end of Year 11 they had still not reached the level of those who had been there since Year 7.
- Similarly, when it looks as if a group has not maintained progress over time it is actually because some students in the group have changed. Since establishing the federation, for example, some of the more able students have transferred to Blackfriars School, where they are better placed. This has the impact of reducing the overall ability of the group remaining, but individual progress remains good. It reflects the careful use of the increased learning possibilities brought about through federation.
- Good progress is maintained across all subjects throughout the school. Within the sixth form this includes an increasing focus on developing the skills needed for life after school which helps provide a very effective transition to the next phase in students' lives.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and much is now outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants plan and work together very effectively to provide high quality team work that underpins the good progress made by students.
- Teachers have very high expectations within an atmosphere of mutual respect, in which everyone is valued irrespective of needs or ability. This also reflects strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all. Students react very positively and respect the adults with whom they are working. They want to do well and because learning is made fun, while also being demanding, they are eager participants.
- While the core skills of English, mathematics and communication are at the heart of much of the teaching and learning, there are also opportunities for students to participate in high quality practical and artistic learning. This includes music, art and cookery. Learning therefore covers a broad and enriching range of subjects. Year 10 students studying Native American totem poles in an art lesson not only developed their own skills but were also engrossed in discussions about another culture.
- Lessons are marked by very high participation levels as students talk to each other about their work, respecting each other's views and ideas. They are usually fully engaged in learning. Teachers' excellent questioning encourages this, while also yielding evidence of the level of students' understanding.
- For example, in a Year 8 computer studies lesson the teacher was able to move around the room questioning and supporting individuals, helping them produce their very best, as they were learning how to produce a newsletter. The session was marked by the way in which students helped and encouraged each other, discussing their ideas.
- Students think a lot about how well they are doing. They often have chances to assess the quality of their own work as well discussing that of classmates. Teachers mark work regularly and usually thoroughly, giving praise for good work. However, they do not always comment on what students could do to improve their work or what they need to do to reach demanding learning targets.
- Very effective use is made of the local community. For example, sixth formers not only continue with the broad education they have received right through school but also develop their social and life skills in practical settings such as making visits to local shops and supermarkets. The same is true of students with an autistic spectrum disorder, where skilled specialist support encourages them to emerge from their social isolation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are engrossed in their work and this has strongly supported rising levels of achievement since the previous inspection. It means that even while students' needs are becoming more complex over time and some of the more-able students now attend Blackfriars School within the federation, standards are rising. Students develop the ability to listen to each other's views and opinions, and to respect them even when they disagree.
- This is frequently seen in lessons, especially in the older classes where students' discussion can be animated and effective, well supported by their teachers. Throughout the school lessons are positive and no time is lost to bad behaviour. Those students who display challenging behaviour, often the result of a clinical condition, are exceptionally well managed through the skill of

teachers and teaching assistants.

- Behaviour around the school and during break times is equally impressive. In the playground students participate in a range of activities which are very well supervised, reflecting the very positive relationships that exist throughout the school.
- Many students display very challenging behaviour when they first arrive. The very effective behaviour policy is skilfully implemented so that over time unacceptable behaviour rapidly diminishes and students learn to take responsibility for their actions. The older students in particular are very proud of their school.
- Students and their parents strongly believe that behaviour and safety are very strong features of school life. The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. This is seen in a variety of ways. Child protection is given high priority, staff are very well trained and the school works effectively with other professionals to give positive support to students and their families where there are concerns.
- Great care is also taken to keep students safe around the school site. When students are taken out on trips or visits rigorous risk assessments are undertaken in advance. This allows students to participate in a range of learning out of the school environment, including residential experiences for the older students. Such experiences benefit students greatly and contribute very strongly to their social and moral development.
- Students say they are well aware of bullying and that it can take various forms including that based on prejudice against other people, or cyber-bullying. Specific work on the misuse of the internet and of social networking sites is done with the students, while the governors have provided sessions in e-safety for their parents. Five students recently represented the school as 'anti-bullying ambassadors' at a county event.
- Attendance has risen over time and is now well above the rate found for special schools in general. This reflects the fact that students enjoy attending school a great deal.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and the head of school and deputy at Coppice share a vision and determination to make this an outstanding school. In doing this they have the very strong support of staff. As one of them put it, 'I believe we are making a huge difference to our students and their families'.
- At the same time the roles of key subject leaders or the head of the sixth form have not yet been fully developed. They are not yet making the most of their roles in checking teaching, sharing best practice with other staff and leading opportunities for staff development. This limits the impact they are having in driving improvement.
- The checking of teachers' lessons, planning and assessment is undertaken regularly by senior leaders. It is part of the effective process for managing the performance of staff, which is also supported by the careful setting of annual objectives to develop expertise as well as meeting the identified needs of the school.
- Teachers understand the links between their performance and their pay, and there are clear expectations of what might be expected of teachers at different stages in their careers. Those on the upper pay scales willingly accept greater levels of responsibility.

- The school checks how well it is doing carefully and uses this to focus areas for development. The areas chosen for annual performance objectives reflect these, as well as addressing individual training needs among staff.
- The curriculum supports effective learning for all, irrespective of individual needs or abilities. In addition to lessons there are many opportunities for wider learning through a good range of clubs, visits and trips which students enjoy very much.
- There are very effective links with parents and carers, who are seen as partners in the education of their children. The exceptionally strong responses to the annual questionnaire show that these links are effective and valued.
- The same is true of links with other professionals, whether it be to support the school in meeting the needs of students set out in individual statements of special educational needs, or in keeping students safe.
- The local authority support is light touch but is available as necessary. For example, it has provided effective training for governors to support their work in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A good level of relevant expertise allows governors to challenge senior leaders effectively, while also being active participants in the success of the school. Governors not only know the amount of the pupil premium but also how it is used and the impact it is having. They have a detailed knowledge of what goes on in school because they find out for themselves through observing lessons and meeting with relevant staff. This also gives them an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching. Challenging targets are set for the performance of the executive headteacher which are monitored throughout the year. There is a good understanding of the relationship between teachers' pay and performance and that salary increases are linked directly to excellent performance. Governors also understand the process for dealing with any inadequate teaching. They have a good understanding of how the performance of the school compares with that of similar schools nationally. Where needed they have willingly accepted the training opportunities offered by the local authority. All legal responsibilities are carried out, including those for safeguarding.

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	124511
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	431145

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation 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	98
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Humphries
Headteacher	Jim Kane (executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2011
Telephone number	01782 297490
Fax number	01782 297496
Email address	office@coppice.staffs.sch.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 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

