

School report

Lancasterian School

Elizabeth Slinger Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2XA

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school has a longstanding record for outstanding effectiveness. Strong and consistent leadership over time has maintained the school's excellence in all of its work as well as in its capacity to sustain improvement.
- By the time pupils leave school at the end of Key Stage 4 their achievement is outstanding. Throughout the school the different groups of pupils currently on roll make excellent progress. From their starting points the proportions making expected progress and more than expected progress are significantly high.
- The outstanding care, support and guidance given by staff greatly reduce the barriers to learning and create excellent conditions for pupils to gain the capabilities and confidence to learn and make progress.
- Teaching is expert right across the school. It is made highly effective by bringing together in a very coherent way the work of teachers, the school's team of therapists and the advice of other professionals. These result in extremely close attention being paid to the breadth of pupils' needs. The use of specialist equipment, physical and medical routines work seamlessly with teaching.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They value learning and the praise given by staff for their achievements is a source of great motivation. Self-esteem and self-confidence develop rapidly and are strong features of pupils' personality by the time they leave.
- The school's robust arrangements for keeping pupils safe ensure they feel safe at all times and that they learn how to keep themselves safe in and beyond school.
- The headteacher has ably built upon the school's strong reputation for highly effective practice in meeting pupils' needs. Senior leaders give the school very clear direction. Their ambitious vision sets high expectations and their excellent leadership has ensured these run through all of the school's work.
- Leaders and governors rigorously check the work of the school and carefully assess pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the success with which improvements are continually being achieved. However, there is scope for leaders to make a more detailed comparison of pupils' performance in each of the key stages and with that of other schools to further help them make decisions.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed seven of the school's nine teachers. The headteacher and assistant headteacher joined inspectors in observing four lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and other leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and checked samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at information on pupils' progress, the school development plan, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils and the school's own evaluation of its work.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 15 parents who completed Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View), a group of parents who met with an inspector and the school's own survey of parents' views. Account was also taken of 24 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lancasterian School's pupils have physical disabilities, complex medical conditions and/or speech language and communication difficulties. They also have moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and a very few have autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils are supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school is part of the larger Lancasterian Organisation which provides a wide range of support services for children from across Manchester in contracts with the local authority. These include services for independence development along with travel training, outreach and inclusion and sensory support services.
- The Lancasterian Organisation has an executive headteacher. The school is led by a headteacher who was appointed in January 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the collection and analysis of data on pupils' progress giving greater rigour to the measurement of progress over each key stage and to comparisons made with pupils' performance in other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils' outstanding achievement is the result of the enormous capacity of leaders and staff to tackle and reduce the impact of pupils' barriers to learning and making progress. The school's very high expectations, expert teaching and an outstanding, all-encompassing structure of care and support leads to all pupils being prepared thoroughly for the future. Leaders advance the opportunities for all pupils to achieve to an outstanding extent.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very impressed by the progress their children make and the exceptional all-round transformation they see in their children's development.
- The large group of pupils supported through the pupil premium achieve as well as other pupils and make the same rapid progress in all of their work.
- Achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and in all the subjects studied is firmly underpinned by pupils' rapid and sustained progress in their physical development. Starting with the outstanding progress in Nursery and Reception Years, pupils experience a significant improvement in their responses and interactions, a heightened engagement in activities and a very positive development in their relationships with others.
- Across the school the most able and the least able pupils are stimulated by the wide variety of excellent work and activities. Thoroughly engaged in learning and challenged extremely well, pupils, according to their capabilities, very quickly secure a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in communication, learning to be very adept at using the most suitable and effective means. The skills of speaking and listening are very quickly acquired. Alternatively, intensive coaching in signing and the use of symbols provide pupils with the effective means to communicate. A good number of pupils use electronic communication aids and with expert teaching use increasingly elaborate language in all of their interactions with others.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading and love the stories they are given to read. The most able pupils hold lively discussions of what they have read. Pupils who need intensive support to read make very good progress in word recognition and understanding text. The youngest pupils very effectively learn letters and the sounds they make. From an early stage they use their skills and make good attempts at reading and spelling words.
- When pupils are prevented from putting pen to paper by their physical and other disabilities, some make significant progress by using computer applications and other methods to record. The most able pupils write in sentences that are punctuated and spelt correctly. They reach a level in their writing before they leave that gains them certificates in Entry Level tests.
- Across the school, pupils make extremely good headway in mathematics, particularly in gaining skills from an early stage in number, counting and calculation. This is extended later to adding and subtracting sums of money. Shopping trips and the community coffee shop managed by pupils are valuable experiences of applying their number skills. The most able pupils are adept at mental calculation with two-digit numbers.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching has been outstanding over time and is outstanding for pupils currently on the school's roll. It is, and has been, consistently very effective in promoting pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers expect the very best from pupils and set a pace for learning that achieves very good results. Assessment of knowledge, skills and understanding is thorough and leads to the detailed planning of pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants contribute very effectively to the strong teamwork found in every lesson. They are well trained and very experienced in supporting learning. They often take the lead role in teaching a pupil or a small group when there is a need for intensive support for

communication, reading or counting to boost progress.

- The pace of learning is expertly adjusted by teachers and their assistants so pupils have the right amount of time to think before they respond. They are able to repeat a task as many times as it takes for them to gain the knowledge and understanding they need. This was well illustrated when a Year 11 pupil was learning how many 20p and 50p pieces there were in £1. He needed lots of time and attempts before seeing that what he knew about counting to 100 helped him with the task.
- The most able pupils are given challenging work and left to do this independently, stretching to the full their own resources of knowledge and skills to answer questions. A Year 5 pupil used all his mental calculation skills to choose two-digit numbers he could only use once which would add up to the series of larger numbers he was given.
- Teachers and their assistants know pupils extremely well and have developed a very positive rapport with them in lessons. Pupils like the staff and get on with them very well which results in the great enjoyment of lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed very effectively. Detailed plans outline the types of challenging behaviour some pupils present and set out good ways of avoiding and dealing with unwanted behaviour. Teachers provide pupils with clear and simple rules which are very effective in them developing positive attitudes to learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and thrive on its friendly and welcoming atmosphere.
- Parents say their children really like school. Parents whose children moved to this school describe the striking and very positive transformation seen in their children's attitude to school. Pupils' experiences at school considerably broaden their horizons and by the time they leave they are optimistic, ambitious and sharply focused in regard to the future.
- The medical conditions of a significant proportion of pupils leads to unavoidable absences, otherwise attendance is above average for a special school.
- Pupils are relaxed and friendly towards all those around them. There has been no bullying or exclusions. Pupils go about the day with a clear sense of purpose and a very good attitude to school that focuses them on work and learning.
- Pupils show positive regard for each other and staff. They are helpful and enjoy their responsibilities such as the work of the school council and the Eco group. Pupils gladly help each other around school and with work in lessons.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The constant close attention of staff and the outstanding care, support and guidance makes pupils feel very safe and ensure they are kept very safe.
- No detail is missed in making the school safe and secure. The school day is meticulously organised and everything is maintained in good order. There are very robust arrangements to check the whereabouts of pupils who are absent without a reason. The very effective work done to improve pupils' physical independence and the rigorous routines maintaining pupils' health and fitness strengthen safety.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and parents are shown how to help with this. School trips, visits to places in the community and stays away organised by the school, on adventure activities in particular, all contribute to deepen pupils' experiences of managing risks and staying safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders at senior level and across the school are a cohesive team with clear aims who ensure the school operates as a highly effective organisation. Leadership also draws great strength from the close involvement of many experts including therapists, medical staff, clinical and educational psychologists. Their contributions are significant in the outstanding support the school provides to pupils and their families.
- The local authority hold the school in high esteem and their confidence in the quality of its leadership is clearly expressed in contracting the school to manage a number of significant support services for vulnerable children across Manchester.
- Parents see the school as a valuable source of help. There is a wide range of advice and support at hand coordinated by the family support adviser. Many parents come into school regularly and have taken up the school's offer of training which they say has helped them manage their children's behaviour better.
- The headteacher has raised expectations regarding what pupils can achieve, with a sharper focus on increasing their progress and linking this with improving further the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' progress is assessed and analysed carefully and teachers play a key role in setting pupils challenging targets and checking their progress. While pupils' progress is measured year by year, their progress over a key stage is not as clearly ascertained making comparisons with the performance of pupils in other similar schools less clear.
- Senior leaders and lead teachers check teaching regularly and have an accurate view of its quality. Teachers have been asked to improve their performance by concentrating on raising the proportions of pupils making expected and more than expected progress above the high levels already achieved.
- Most staff take a lead in managing and developing an aspect of the school's work. Teams work on checking and improving areas of the curriculum. Teaching assistants are very active in leading and developing sports, visits, residential trips and holiday play schemes. Their very able leadership is ambitious, enthusiastic and energetic.
- The curriculum provides an excellent variety of experiences which impact enormously on improving pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Communication, literacy and numeracy are planned and resourced extremely well. The wider range of activities including many sports and adventure activities such as football, sailing, cheerleading, rock climbing and zip wiring greatly enthuse pupils and are taken up by many of them. The outstanding curriculum very effectively challenges assumptions about disability and its limitations.
- The primary funding for sport helps to build very effectively on the school's already comprehensive and strong provision. A lunch time organiser is paid to support a good range of additional activities such as wheelchair dancing which has proven very popular. Expert coaching in physical education is now afforded and the costs of pupils' participation in city based sports activities and competitions are being met. This raises expectations in line with leaders' ambitions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are very committed to the continuing success of the school, maintaining its high standards, the welfare of pupils and their achievement. Their committees are active in keeping a robust oversight of the work of the school and they ensure governors fully fulfil all of their duties. Governors have a range of experience and expertise which ensures they tackle their responsibilities very effectively. They gain a good knowledge of the school's work from their regular, focused visits and from detailed school reports. Close attention is paid to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, their knowledge of which guides questions on how leaders are planning to further improve the school, teachers' performance and pupils' outcomes, those supported through the pupil premium in particular.

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	105608
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	439641

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dean Cavanagh
Headteacher	Katie Cass
Date of previous school inspection	24 February 2010
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