

Lakeside School

Lemsford Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6YN

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

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.

- Achievement throughout the school is excellent due to the school's focus on helping every pupil achieve their very best.
- The overall effectiveness of the post-16 provision is good and equips them well for the future.
- The school focuses extremely well on developing pupils' physical, communication and interaction skills and uses its expertise in these fields to assist other special schools within the local authority.
- Teaching is exceptional. Teachers and learning support workers operate as one to make sure the best possible outcomes for the pupils are achieved.
- The headteacher, supported by a strong leadership team, provides inspirational leadership. All have a clear focus on making sure that all pupils gain the best possible outcomes, and this includes developing staff expertise across the school.
- Links with parents are a vital part of school life and all parents are highly positive about the school.
- Partnerships with other professionals and organisations support the pupils' development very effectively.
- The governance of the school is highly effective. Governors utilise on-going training to make sure they can carefully monitor all aspects of the school.
- Many pupils enter the school with challenging behaviour as a result of their wider difficulties. The school's excellent behaviour policy and practice helps pupils to improve their behaviour to become effective learners and full members of the community.
- Pupils have a good basic understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and all stated they felt safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, eight of them undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority. Several pupils read to inspectors and several case studies were examined that provided detailed information on pupil progress.
- A total of 18 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were taken into account, alongside 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including information on pupil tracking and achievement, planning for teaching and learning, self-evaluation and school development planning and key policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pupils at Lakeside have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, either for profound or severe learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is average. This extra government funding supports certain groups of pupils, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- A number of Year 11 and post-16 pupils attend part-time courses at Oaklands College, Welwyn Garden City and Mudlarks Horticultural Provision in Hertfordshire.
- The proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school at times other than the normal starting points is well above average.
- Pupils are taught in seven mixed-aged classes due to very small numbers in each year group.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make use of external moderation and evaluation of teaching to make sure that current high quality teaching is maintained.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The achievement of pupils and their progress from very low starting points is outstanding. Often medical and/or learning difficulties hinder learning, and for most pupils progress is rightly measured in small steps. However, school information shows that the proportion of pupils matching and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics, as well as in a range of learning and social skills, compares very favourably with that found nationally for pupils with similar needs. Pupils achieve particularly well in their physical, emotional and social development as a result of the school's strong focus on these areas.
- Teachers measure pupils' progress extremely effectively and so set challenging personal and learning targets. Pupils are very well supported to reach their potential and, because of the highly positive relationships, pupils really enjoy coming to school and always try their hardest to succeed.
- Across the whole school there is clear and robust evidence of the progress being made by pupils because teachers record and monitor this very effectively. For example, in a reading lesson for pupils from Year 11 and post-16, the teacher made it clear what skills were being worked on and the progress that had been made already. A wide range of communication aids were used as well as visual stimuli to support learning.
- There is a wide range of ability in the school, reflecting the range of difficulties presented by pupils. For those who are able, reading is promoted strongly and well supported through the excellent teaching of phonics (the understanding of letters and the sounds they make). The most able pupils are well supported to achieve their very best in all areas of their learning.
- Post-16 pupils learn a variety of practical skills, to equip them well for when they leave school. They have opportunities for both college courses and work experience placements in local businesses, such as a horticultural centre. Students gain accredited awards for the work they have completed. These awards and placements allow them to develop their skills practically in work based situations and so make exceptional progress, particularly so in their personal development.
- Although the school does not have a formal sixth form setting, it does encourage pupils to take responsibility for a range of school activities, such as the school council and tuck shop. They are given freedom to move around the school during break and lunch times and their classrooms provide an excellent grown-up environment where they enjoy being.
- Even though pupils are working at a low level for their age, the explanations and vocabulary used by adults are appropriate and challenging. Therefore, as pupils have a full understanding of what is expected of them, they feel confident to try their best and this helps to create the outstanding progress they make. Teachers' careful and thorough recording of all types of pupils' progress shows that over the last year nearly all have exceeded their challenging targets both academically and in their physical, social and communication skills.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the high expectations of staff make sure that children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. This provides a solid foundation for the rest of their time in school and the drive to maximise pupils' outcomes is maintained throughout the whole school. As a result, by Year 11 pupils are extremely well prepared for the next phase of their lives. The post-16 pupils are also provided with an extensive range of opportunities which provide an excellent foundation for their future full-time college and work placements.

- There are no differences in the outcomes for any identified groups, including those from minority ethnic groups or those who speak English as an additional language.
- The use of the pupil premium is very effective and its impact is tracked carefully. This shows that eligible pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points, similar to other pupils in the school. The funding provides for specific one-to-one or small group specialist support, additional sensory resources and provision to support pupils' families. The effect this has had was clearly shown in the case studies reviewed by the inspectors. One study showed the pupil had developed skills in speech and communication, confidence and social skills as well as developing independence skills, for example, being able to use bus services or going to the shops on their own. Academic performance improved dramatically as their progress accelerated rapidly as the result of their improved confidence and self-esteem.
- High achievement is also reflected in practical and sporting opportunities, and pupils were highly keen to tell inspectors of their love of sports and physical activity. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in the sporting field. The school is carefully planning the effective use of the new physical education funding for primary aged pupils, including the use of specialist sports provision to extend their opportunities. It is too early to judge the impact of this additional provision.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently good with a high and increasing proportion that is outstanding.
- One very important reason why pupils do so well is that staff work together extremely effectively. So well, in fact, that in many lessons it is difficult to distinguish between the teacher and learning support workers. In and out of lessons, they all support and help pupils to increase their understanding.
- In a multi-sensory lesson for Key Stage 3 pupils, the staff team used a wide range of sensory stimuli, such as light, sound, textures and movement very effectively to develop an understanding of their senses. Pupils were encouraged to listen, look, touch and move in a variety of ways to experience as wide a range of their senses as possible. All the adults present carefully recorded the responses of each pupil, and adapted what and how they were doing to match the pupils' changing circumstances and needs.
- Teachers use the information on individual pupils' progress very effectively. The school's leadership monitors pupils' progress carefully and uses this to work with teachers on setting challenging individual targets. Since this approach is continuous, any pupils not making the expected progress are identified quickly and strategies employed to enable them to get back on track. The considerable expertise of senior leaders supports classroom teachers extremely well, helping create a real team approach to learning.
- This school's close monitoring of learning helps teachers to have the highest expectations for their pupils. Planning allows them to meet the individual needs of every pupil, which is rooted in the school's strong commitment to equal opportunities. Work is challenging, the pace of learning is highly appropriate and activities during lessons consistently maintain interest, enthusiasm and encourage pupils to do their best across the whole range of subjects taught.
- The excellent use of a wide range of technology supports pupils' learning and skills and so

develops their ability to learn quicker. This is the case whether this is a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties who can communicate using computer assisted technology, or the more academically able using hand-held tablets to record their work and discuss it with their peers and teachers.

- In the outdoor areas and school hall, pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve excellent outcomes in their physical activities as a result of highly effective teaching. Pupils are supported in standing and encouraged to engage in gentle physical movement. Staff have a clear understanding of each individual's limitations but create appropriate challenges to maximise movement in a safe manner. Adults encourage pupils to maximise their independence and pupils respond to this positively, for example, by stretching and moving their limbs in a variety of ways. All pupils are fully engaged and respond positively to the high expectations and challenges.
- Pupils' work is marked carefully and appropriately, care is taken to make sure pupils understand how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Many pupils enter the school with very challenging behaviour, often caused by their wider learning and/or medical difficulties. The school's effective, positive approach to behaviour makes sure that pupils are able to both control and modify their behaviour, and so become successful learners and members of both the school and wider community.
- In lessons, little or no time is lost as a result of poor behaviour and the focus of the school is on learning. During the pupil discussion, one pupil summed up their attitudes when they said, 'We love coming to school and we try to behave as best as we can because our teachers are lovely and do their best for us.'
- Staff are given comprehensive training in the management of behaviour. This includes the use of carefully managed physical restraint on those rare occasions when it is necessary. This is always logged carefully when used. However, the prime focus on behaviour is on the de-escalation of potential incidents. This is a highly effective approach which creates a positive learning and social environment.
- Strong support given to parents and carers helps them to develop a common approach to behaviour that works both at home and school, and so gives consistency to the pupils. Parents and carers are highly positive about behaviour in school.
- Parents, carers, staff and pupils are rightly extremely positive about the behaviour seen around school and the part this plays in creating a positive learning and social environment.
- This same positive attitude exists in relation to safety at the school, which is given the highest priority given the vulnerable nature of many of the pupils. Everyone in the school stresses the need for keeping safe and understanding how important this is in life generally. Great care is taken with safety on trips outside school, which are an important element of school life for all pupils and add so much to life experiences.
- The school is a happy place where pupils learn and socialise with each other extremely well. Bullying is not an issue but pupils are, however, aware of what bullying is and why it is not good. This includes an understanding of cyber bullying and the risks of misusing social networking sites on the internet.

- Attendance is low because a large number of pupils suffer from a wide range of medical issues which mean that they lose time in school for health reasons. Absence for other reasons is rare because pupils so very much enjoy school and want to attend as often as they can.
- Part of the school's provision for older pupils is to provide college and work experience. Detailed risk assessments are in place, and great care is taken to make sure that this is a positive and successful part of learning. This also results in all pupils for whom it is appropriate leaving the school to go on to college placements.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has maintained and developed the excellent results seen in previous years. Her vision for the school is shared by her leadership team colleagues and governors alike. All have clear roles and responsibilities, helping to create the positive learning community that is Lakeside school. The continued success and improvements of the school since the last inspection point to a strong capacity to sustain future improvements. The commitment to meeting each individual pupil's needs provides strong support for the school's constant drive for equal opportunities.
- The responses in the staff questionnaire clearly point to their pride and commitment to the school and how happy they are with the way in which the school supports their development.
- The way in which the effectiveness of teaching and learning are monitored are detailed. The leadership team provide excellent support and guidance to teachers to develop and maintain the quality of their teaching and the learning experiences they provide for pupils. However, no external moderation or evaluation is currently used to support this, with the result that opportunities to consider new or alternative approaches to help maintain the current high levels may be missed. Staff have clear annual objectives to support them in developing their work. Linked to this is a strong programme of continual training to make sure that teachers are constantly updating their skills and knowledge. Subject leaders and managers also provide excellent advice and in-house support to extend this further. These strategies help to meet the needs of both the school as well as each individual's professional development. There is a relentless focus on helping pupils to maximise their full potential.
- Links between teachers' performance and rates of pay are effective and those who wish to progress through the upper pay scales are expected to both assist the school as a whole, as well as having the highest possible standards in their own work. The performance of teachers is reviewed annually and a key part of this is the teachers' own assessment of their performance, which helps them to be reflective of their work.
- The school identifies its needs effectively and focuses on continuous improvement. Self-assessment is accurate and leads to the identification of priorities for development. For example, the school has identified that the information systems they have were not easily accessible and have made considerable changes to overcome this issue.
- Links with parents and carers are exceptionally strong and are based on very good and regular communication. In addition to very frequent contact between teachers and home, the school works closely with families to help parents and carers play an active part in the education of their children.
- Links between the school and a wide range of other appropriate professional services, including health, sports, schools and children's services all support learning effectively. Great care is taken

to try to make sure that all support is seamless and cohesive.

- The local authority provides a 'light touch' approach to this school due to its positive results.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is strong and the governing body has a clear understanding of its role. Individual governors have areas of responsibility, including safeguarding, finance and teaching and learning, all based on their individual expertise. They scrutinise the school for themselves through a range of information provided by their own first-hand observations, and through reports from staff and the headteacher. They have a clear grasp of what is being taught and the outcomes the overall provision provides. They have established effective policies for the management of staff pay. They understand how the effectiveness of teaching is measured and link this to teachers' pay. Governors understand how the underperformance of staff is handled. They know that high quality teaching leads to high quality learning and so excellent pupils' progress. More specifically, they carefully monitor the outcomes of any new initiatives and targeted spending such as the pupil premium funding or the new sports funding. They are well aware of how the performance of their school compares with that of other special schools. All legal responsibilities, including safeguarding, are currently compliant with regulations.

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	117680
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425343

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Lloyd
Headteacher	Judith Chamberlain
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2008
Telephone number	01707 327410
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