

Sunningdale School

Shaftoe Road, Springwell, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4HA

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- From very low starting points pupils make excellent progress in their learning and personal development. Achievement for all groups of pupils is outstanding.
- Sustained progress is made by all groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium. The school's own 'pathways to communication' and other bespoke activities ensures this.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding in its impact on pupils' achievement over time. Teachers have very high expectations of what all pupils can achieve academically and for their personal development.
- Staff use their extensive knowledge of each pupil to set new learning challenges and make lessons interesting and exciting. They ensure pupils' skills are built up systematically and successfully, using whatever communication methods is best for the individual pupil.
- Sunningdale's unique curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is due to the many events and experiences that take place for all pupils.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils benefit from the expert and consistent management of their behaviour by all staff. Consequently, most pupils learn, over time, to understand and manage their own behaviour. These elements combine to make an exceptional contribution to ensuring learning areas are safe and welcoming and this ensures pupils are able to learn extremely well.
- A combination of outstanding leadership and management at all levels and excellent governance has ensured that the school has continued to move forward. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders keep a very close check on all aspects of the school's work and so they have a very clear view of how well it is doing. They produce extensive information and documents to keep governors and members of staff up to date with pupils' performance and school developments. This information is complex and very detailed. It would make it quicker and easier for others to use and understand if it were presented in smaller and simpler formats.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine lessons, four of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They also made a number of short visits to classrooms and other learning activities.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, pupils, senior leaders and staff. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- A range of school documents was examined including the school improvement plan, the school's data of pupils' achievement, records relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and the minutes of the governing body meetings.
- There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to access them. Inspectors considered the responses from a parent survey conducted by the school earlier in the term, and held a meeting with a group of parents. The responses from 30 staff questionnaires were considered.

Inspection team

Michele Crichton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janice Stephenson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sunningdale is a school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. There is also an increasing proportion, year-on-year, of pupils attending the school with autistic spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils attend the school from across the City of Sunderland and a small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and almost twice as many boys than girls attend the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils 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 manages a portage service and a language and learning partnership on behalf of the local authority. These did not form part of this inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its range of accreditations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the complex and detailed information that senior leaders produce, is made available in formats that are more succinct in order to make it quicker and easier for others to understand and use.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is excellent. Pupils start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. Taking account of their individual starting points, their disability or special educational needs, pupils make significant progress in developing their communication and mathematical skills and also in their physical and personal development.
- From the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Year 6, pupils' progress is excellent. This is because pupils benefit from high quality teaching, a bespoke curriculum and an extensive range of additional learning opportunities. A systematic and rigorous analysis of each individual pupil's progress is carried out. This information is used extremely well to consider and plan the next steps in pupils' learning, so that pupils always make the best progress they can.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. Regardless of pupils' disability or special educational needs, all pupils are included in all activities in every class. Additional funding provided through the pupil premium is spent very well, supporting interventions to accelerate the communication, literacy and numeracy skills of those pupils who are eligible for the funding and so they make the same progress as others in the school.
- All lessons are highly personalised, very well-planned, with activities that are imaginative and interesting to ensure pupils' excellent all-round development. Inspection evidence and the school's careful tracking of pupils' progress and achievements clearly demonstrate their excellent achievement.
- Even though pupils' ability to read and write are widely different, they achieve exceptionally well. Whenever it is appropriate, pupils are given very good opportunities to practise pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills and across all areas of their learning. This provides them with a firm foundation for later literacy and numeracy skill development. For example, it leads to some pupils learning effective ways to recognise words, such as the linking of letters and sounds.
- Pupils are able to make numerous choices in their day which helps to develop their independence and builds up their self-confidence. They learn to communicate very effectively using speech, sign language or symbols. Throughout the school, pupils for whom it is appropriate, make very good use of computers and digital equipment both to communicate and to help them with their learning. As a result, all groups of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over-time is outstanding and helps all groups of pupils to achieve outstandingly well during their time at school.
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff, know the pupils very well and so they are able to ensure that understanding and enjoyment takes place. An outstanding lesson in the well-resourced learning environment of the 'learning lab' captured many of the best aspects of teaching. This carefully structured time enabled the pupils to develop their own particular talents and interests through play, experiment and exploration.
- Classrooms are bright and stimulating. Teachers and support staff are highly skilled at involving pupils in their own learning and developing independence. All staff implement well the whole-school programme they call 'pathways to communication'. Staff ensure pupils' skills are built up systematically and successfully, in a variety of learning places and using whatever communication methods is best for the individual pupil.
- Pupils have a wide range of communication levels and differing needs, so feedback to pupils about their work takes a variety of forms. All forms of staff feedback, from spoken praise, signing, to written comments, are undertaken very well and help pupils know what to do to improve their work.
- Pupils' development is extremely well captured in their 'learning journey', a record of their

achievements as they move from class to class in the school. These documents demonstrate very well the exceptional progress made by pupils over time. Staff write daily comments, well-structured summaries and evaluations indicating what pupils can do well and how they can improve further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' relationships with staff in the school are excellent. Pupils indicate they feel they are cared for very well. This is because the school does all it can to listen to what pupils have to say and provides many opportunities for them to share their views and opinions every day. For example, this ranges from choosing their own learning activities to their own choice of lunch and snack options.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They like school and it is evident that they very much enjoy the experiences they have each day. Pupils' attendance at school is reduced at times by illness or times that they need to spend time in hospital.
- Activities and work are very tightly matched to pupils differing needs and abilities and so they thoroughly enjoy learning. Pupils are keen to say how 'brilliant' the school is and that 'they don't do any work they just play all day'.
- The responses to the school's parental survey and the views of parents spoken to during the inspection, show how they are overwhelmingly in support of the school and the education their children enjoy. Typical comments were, 'I am overwhelmed by the progress made by my child and could not ask for anything better. Thank you for everything you do'. 'My child is always so excited it's a school day, as a parent what more could I ask for?' or 'the staff couldn't do any more'.
- Most pupils' behaviour is excellent because they are helped to learn over-time what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is through very effective guidance and the consistent approach from all staff. When pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, staff support them exceptionally well so that learning is not interrupted.
- The arrangements in Sunningdale for pupils' safety are robust. Pupils are taught to understand the major risks to their safety, in a way that is appropriate to their age and developing levels of understanding.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a very clear view of success for the school. She has built an extremely strong staff team who share her ambition for the school. The senior leadership team is very able and insightful, together with a highly dedicated team of teachers and teaching assistants, and an extremely knowledgeable governing body, all are fully committed to ensuring that all pupils develop as well as they can academically but also personally, socially and emotionally.
- Leaders and managers have consistently high expectations of everyone in the school. All staff are clear about their responsibilities. Leaders carry out thorough and regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. High quality training provided for teachers and support staff help them to continually improve their skills. Senior leaders ensure that pay increases for staff are clearly linked to their performance and the progress their pupils make.
- Leaders know the school extremely well. They gather and produce a large amount of information on many areas of the school, which they critically review and analyse. While this information is used very well to drive school improvement, it is extremely detailed. Sometimes staff and governors would benefit from more succinct headline news or brief summaries that would more quickly and easily keep them up to date. This would save time and make it clearer and easier to use the information in their day-to-day work.

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- All pupils benefit from a highly relevant curriculum that supports their all-round development as a young person with special educational needs. Staff have developed this truly creative curriculum over a number of years. It enables all groups of pupils to learn through play, investigation and exploration and meets their needs and abilities extremely well. This is a major reason why pupils make such excellent progress.
 - The curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through multiple theme days and activities that take place in school. Events are held representing different faiths which parents attend and enjoy alongside their children. There are also visits from a wide range of outside visitors, regular visits from other schools and outings by minibus to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world.
 - The local authority provides 'light-touch' support to the school. The school is well respected by the authority and staff help support improvements in other schools.
 - All staff members who completed the inspection staff questionnaire spoke in the highest possible terms of the school's leadership and how proud they were to be in the school. Parents too are overwhelming in their support for the school and the education that their children receive and enjoy.
 - **The governance of the school**
 - School governance is very strong. Governors have a secure knowledge and understanding of the strengths of the school. They play an integral part in establishing how it can improve even further. They are closely involved in the management of staff and know that the quality of teaching is outstanding and how this has been achieved. Governors are well trained and take advantage of courses they think would benefit their own practice, such as the monitoring the work of the school. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and how it helps to raise achievement for those pupils who benefit from the individual and small group activities it funds.
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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	108882
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	401020

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Toni Mathieson
Headteacher	Celia Wright
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
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