

West Oaks SEN Specialist School and College

Westwood Way, Boston Spa, Wetherby, LS23 6DX

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

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.

- The principal and all staff and governors have the highest expectations for pupils and are ambitious for them to achieve the best they can.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in developing language and communication skills. They are learning to enjoy books and are proud of the progress they have made to improve their reading and writing.
- Staff are a highly effective and skilled team. They know how to get the best from pupils. Not a minute is lost in helping pupils to learn or to do things for themselves.
- Pupils are happy, feel safe and are keen to learn. They get on well with each other and with staff. Their attendance has improved dramatically.
- The school works closely with parents and keeps them very well informed about their children's progress and behaviour.
- Sixth-form students enjoy going to college and running their own company, 'We Can Do Co'. Highly relevant work placements and programmes prepare them exceptionally well for life and work.
- The school's outstanding leaders and managers make excellent use of partnerships and research ideas to drive improvements in teaching.
- Governors have an excellent knowledge of the school. They are meticulous in checking how well the school and pupils are doing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons across all three sites. Six of the lessons were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they observed work-based learning taking place at the school's shop in Boston Spa.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, members of the governing body, and a representative of Leeds local authority.
- The 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, and inspectors also took account of the school's own recent survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors scrutinised 55 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and a wide range of evidence was examined including the school's own data about pupils' progress, school plans and reviews of its work and documentation relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Gina White, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The number of pupils at the school is broadly the same as at the last inspection.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, with the greatest proportion experiencing severe and moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Since the previous inspection the proportion of pupils with complex communication needs and autistic spectrum disorders has increased.
- Pupils are taught mainly on one of three sites; the majority of pupils are based at the main site in the village of Boston Spa. Provision also includes a permanent base in nearby Boston Spa High School for Key Stage 3 and 4 students The Oakwood Lane site in Leeds, approximately 10 miles away from the main site, provides education for 24 pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium, which is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support children in the care of the local authority, those eligible for free school meals and the children of military personnel.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and 19% of pupils are from a diverse range of ethnic groups.
- Most sixth-form students attend work related courses at Leeds City College.
- The school specialises in communication and applied learning and staff provide support to children in 45 schools in the Children Leeds North East partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the excellent practice in the checking of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science to all other subjects in order to inform decisions about the use of resources.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All pupils make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. They learn well over time because teachers skilfully match work to pupils' individual abilities and needs. Pupils learning and progress are checked regularly. Their targets are kept under continuous review and are always challenging.
- The youngest pupils, and those with profound learning needs, are beginning to recognise symbols, match letters and sounds and develop early counting skills. Regular routines and extensive and well planned play opportunities contribute significantly to their personal development and communication.
- All pupils make rapid progress in English and mathematics and have many opportunities to apply them in lessons and at other times, for example, by building symbols into sentences to choose a snack at break time and interpreting tally charts to fill the orders other students had placed for sandwiches.
- The more-able pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 are becoming keen and discriminating readers; for example, they can discuss features of books and say what they like about them. 'I like these pictures and reading about scary stories.'
- Pupils are delighted at the progress they are making with reading and writing and are proud of their work in many subjects. Parents and carers share this view. Most pupils use computers confidently. Students in the sixth form are developing a wider range of work-related skills and make high quality products to sell in the school shop.
- Alternative provision at college and work placements make an excellent contribution to developing sixth-formers' independence and preparation for life and work. The qualifications they achieve are well matched to their abilities and interests and almost all students continue in education or training.
- Pupils who have the most complex needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, achieve as well as all other pupils. Pupils who are eligible for pupil-premium funding make rapid progress in mathematics as a result of extra individual support. They achieve as well as their peers in English, mathematics and other subjects.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. They know what pupils need to learn next and lessons are expertly planned with challenging activities and tasks.
- Teaching and support staff work effectively together in all lessons. They are skilled at getting the best from pupils. In lessons, pupils are fully involved from the outset. They are excited when they are given their assignments and targets, and clear about what they are expected to achieve.
- Changes in activity and tasks are used effectively to sustain pupils' concentration and they have a good impact on their progress. This was used to good effect in a music lesson. Pupils quickly learned words, rhythm, timing and actions to sing a wide range of songs.
- A good mix of teacher-led and independent work helps younger children to learn well.
- Teachers' expert questioning helps pupils to understand and to work things out for themselves. They give pupils time to make their response using symbols and pictures.
- Very effective use of resources gives depth to pupils learning and supports their understanding. For example, in a religious studies lesson, soothing Indian music, artefacts and film helped pupils to understand about Hindu religious practice.
- During lessons staff regularly praise pupils. Written marking and feedback in pupils' books is a regular and consistent feature. Excellent examples were seen of points for improvement to help

pupils take the next step in learning. Methods used are appropriate to pupils' age and development. Pupils know how well they are doing and are proud of their achievements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Typically, pupils are happy and enjoy learning. They readily take part in lessons and after-school activities including 'Saturday Play and Stay' sessions. Pupils show respect for staff and for each other; they listen and work together very well during lessons.
- Pupils feel safe and well-cared for and supported at school. They know what to do to stay safe in some situations, including when using computers. Bullying is rare but pupils understand some of the different forms it can take and what to do if it should ever happen.
- Behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Specialist support and consistent approaches underpin this so that everyone who works with each pupil knows how best to support them.
- Pupils with behavioural needs make rapid progress in managing their own behaviour. Exclusions are rare and have fallen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Attendance is improving. This is reflected in the attendance of those who do not have medical needs. The proportion of pupils with 100% attendance has increased rapidly over time in response to a host of initiatives and reward programmes.
- Pupils' independence and responsibility are well promoted throughout the school. Sixth-form students enjoy the opportunities to demonstrate their independence through cooking meals, attending college and undertaking work placements in the school shop.
- Parents agree that their children are kept safe and enjoy coming to school. Excellent daily reports help to keep them well informed about their children's progress and behaviour.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal is passionate that pupils at West Oaks should achieve their best. He has built a highly competent and committed team of staff who share his enthusiasm and high expectations of all pupils. The school promotes equality of opportunity very effectively and does not allow any form of discrimination.
- The quality of teaching across all school sites has improved since the previous inspection. This is because leaders have high expectations of staff and their performance is kept under close review. Best practice and research are expertly used to drive further improvement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Regular review makes sure that the learning needs of all groups and individuals are well met. For example, partnerships are used effectively to enable talented mathematicians and scientists to attend classes in mainstream schools.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Specialist facilities for play, therapy and extensive use of trips and visitors provide meaningful first-hand experiences to promote pupils reflection and preparation for life and work. Sixth-form students' work placements in the school shop provide an excellent introduction to retail work.
- The local authority appropriately provides only light touch support for the school. Their guidance and specialist support helped the school to make better use of the data it collects.
- School leaders check pupils' progress regularly and thoroughly in English, mathematics and science. They use this information well to inform their plans and spending decisions. They recognise the need to do this as carefully in all other subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have high expectations of the performance of staff and pupils. They are very knowledgeable and well informed about all aspects of the school's work as a result of regular updates and their careful questioning of data. Governors provide strong support and challenge to senior leaders. They choose to spend pupil-premium funding on one-to-one support for

eligible pupils and intervention to improve their attainment in mathematics. Regular visits enable them to see at first-hand the very good impact that their decisions, including about pupil-premium spending, are having on pupils' learning and progress. Governors ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Safeguarding and health and safety are consistent across all of the school sites, are monitored vigilantly and meet current requirements.

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	108133
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	400965

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	140
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Margaret Burgess
Principal	Andrew Hodkinson
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
Telephone number	01937 844772
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