

Linwood School

Alma Road, Winton, Bournemouth, BH9 1AJ

Inspection dates

19–20 March 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

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding because all pupils, whatever their learning difficulty or disability, are given work that stretches them. Also, pupils benefit from the very wide range of learning experiences provided by the school.
- The very strong team of senior leaders and governors continually challenges the school to get even better. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the next steps needed to improve further.
- The trusting and respectful relationships that exist between staff and students underpin pupils' outstanding behaviour and safety.
- Outstanding teaching is based on teachers' excellent knowledge of successful approaches for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This expertise is used very effectively to support other schools and to establish close links with the wider community.
- Teachers and support staff use a range of resources and strategies which are very effective in helping develop pupils' communication skills. Teachers give pupils time to help them make choices. In a few lessons the pace of learning slows because pupils have to wait their turn for a little too long.
- The school works very closely with parents and carers and therapists to ensure everyone pulls together to help maximise pupils' learning. Parents and carers hold very positive views of the school and value the support they receive from the school.
- Provision for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition is exceptional. Staff are particularly successful in helping pupils manage their anxious behaviour and deal with change.
- The checking and recording of pupils' progress is exemplary from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 11. Although when setting targets for improvement, teachers do not always distinguish clearly between good and outstanding progress.
- The sixth form is good. A very appropriate programme is successful in developing students' skills for independent living. In a few areas, the recording of students' progress does not always link closely with the information passed on at the end of Year 11 to ensure all the gains students make in their learning are captured fully.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students leave school having become much more confident, independent and socially aware young people.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 18 teachers, three of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, heard some pupils read and observed their behaviour at break, lunchtime and in a school assembly.
- The views of parents and carers were gained through 19 responses to the online Parent View survey, attendance at the school's parent group meeting and informal discussions with parents and carers who brought their children to school. Returns from 66 questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's plans for improvement, information on pupils' progress, lesson plans, work in pupils' books and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Andrew Redpath, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional inspector

Roger Thurlbeck

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Linwood School is a special school which provides education for students with a wide range of needs, including autistic spectrum conditions and moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. About two thirds of students are boys and a few students have additional behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs and attend from Bournemouth and the surrounding area.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding made available by the government for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals or those with parents or carers in the armed services) is above average.
- The school has responsibility for managing the local authority's learning support service.
- The school is a National Support School and a Leading Edge School, forming part of a national network for high performing schools which offer advice and support to other schools. It also has specialist status for cognition and learning and provides training in aspects of special education to local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching which is not outstanding in a few lessons by quickening the pace of learning.
- Use information on pupils' progress and ensure all pupils make the fastest possible progress by:
 - making clearer the difference between good and outstanding progress when setting targets for improvement
 - linking courses studied in the sixth form more closely with the information on students' attainment which is passed on at the end of Year 11.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment is low due to pupils' disabilities and special educational needs. However, given their starting points, students make outstanding progress.
- Students who leave school at the end of Year 11 or after attending the sixth form gain recognised qualifications in independence. Those with moderate learning difficulties gain Entry Level qualifications in English, mathematics and science. Some gain GCSE qualifications in mathematics and science. A few students take an additional GCSE course in English at a local secondary school.
- Pupils with severe learning difficulties make very good progress in learning to read, write simple sentences and to count. Practical activities are used to develop an understanding of mathematics, for example when older students shop and buy ingredients for a meal they cook.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to express their views through the use of signing, pictures, symbols and switches. Their physical development is promoted extremely well, for example through the regular use of hydrotherapy and physiotherapy.
- The academic attainment of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition is very wide. They all make very good progress. Some are at the early stages of linking writing with language, while a few are following GCSE courses. They all learn to manage their behaviour and to develop an increasing awareness of others. They learn to make choices, follow routines and to take turns.
- Pupils with an autistic spectrum condition and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are helped to make such fast progress because of the school's close partnership with parents and carers. Agreed approaches are followed at school and in the home which reinforce learning.
- Funding received through the pupil premium is targeted to provide individual reading programmes and to increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Early evidence, using pupils' reading scores, shows pupils are making quicker progress and catching up with others in their class.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from a thorough check of their individual needs and abilities and get off to a very good start. Pupils' progress is checked regularly and small gains noted as they move through the school up to Year 11. The school's information shows that there is no difference between the progress of different groups or between boys and girls.
- Older students develop their skills for independent living extremely well through, for example, the 'Going Solo' travel training programme used to help some use public transport on their own, learning to shop and cook meals, and attending work-related courses in horticulture and catering.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good rather than outstanding because, while progress is measured through the completion of parts of the courses of study, this does not capture all the gains students make in their learning. Senior leaders recognise this as a next step for development.
- All students who leave the school find suitable places in education or further training.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because teachers and support staff have a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. They pitch work at the right level which enables pupils to learn quickly. This creates a very positive climate for learning with teachers and assistants busily engaged in helping pupils to learn.
- All staff follow a detailed whole-school policy on communication. They use a range of signing, pictures, symbols and ICT very effectively to make sure pupils understand the timetable for the

school day and to help them take part fully in lessons.

- Teaching assistants contribute greatly to pupils' learning because they are skilful at encouraging pupils to do as much as possible for themselves.
- Teachers use questioning well to check that pupils understand what they have to do. They give time for pupils to collect their thoughts and make decisions. Occasionally the pace of learning slows for a few pupils because they wait a little too long to participate in an activity.
- Pupils are given praise and encouragement to help them achieve. Those who are able to write have their work marked regularly, sometimes with the use of stickers and symbols.
- There are excellent arrangements for recording pupils' progress. Small gains in learning are noted and used to plan the next activity. More-capable pupils are involved in setting their own targets. Teachers set pupils' targets for improvement which describe progress as 'good or better'. They do not always distinguish clearly when progress is outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils really enjoy coming to school because they feel valued and they are able to take part in a wide range of interesting activities. As one pupil commented, 'You learn a lot at this school; I feel happy in myself.' Attendance is well above average when compared with other special schools. Any absence is due to pupils' ill health.
- Pupils report they feel safe and that they can talk to staff if they have any concerns. Those with more profound needs are able to communicate their sense of enjoyment and awareness through gesture and the sensitive use of communication aids by staff.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Some students recognise that others occasionally display inappropriate behaviour linked to their communication and learning difficulties. Staff manage any incidents of anxious behaviour calmly and sensitively. As a result, pupils trust staff and learn to manage their behaviour more effectively themselves.
- Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and wider community. Some serve on the school council, take responsibility for managing a budget and use it to improve the school, for example by buying new playground equipment and tools for the school allotment. Sixth form students work in a local Salvation Army café as part of their work experience programme. During the inspection, pupils took charge of setting up and running the lighting and sound for a drama production.
- Achievements are recognised through the school's reward system and in assemblies, which boosts pupils' self-esteem.
- Pupils are encouraged to make choices throughout their schooling. For example, students in Year 11, and their parents and carers, are given information about different options beyond Linwood, and some choose to leave and attend local colleges. Those who stay experience a sense of moving on because the well-designed sixth form accommodation is separate from the rest of the school and provides a more adult environment.
- The personal, social and health education programmes give pupils an understanding of how to keep safe and make healthy choices. This includes a 'Streetwise' topic, which helps pupils learn about managing risks in the community, e-safety and relationships education.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Appropriate policies cover all aspects of pupils' intimate care and health needs and ensure pupils are treated with dignity and respect.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, leads a highly effective leadership team that is continually trying to improve the school. Staff at all levels are passionate about their work and determined that pupils should achieve their best.
- Parents and carers greatly appreciate the open and understanding approach shown by staff.

They are encouraged to become closely involved in their child's education and several attend the regular parent and carer group meetings. Many benefit from training provided by the school which helps them to better understand and manage their child's disabilities and special educational needs.

- Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They work closely with other partners and with the local authority to extend opportunities for pupils' learning. For example, they have planned new provision for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition and for students in the sixth form, and established links with local schools to enable a few students to gain additional qualifications.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well through the broad range of subjects taught and the many additional activities. For example, students enjoy taking part in drama productions, visits, residential trips, holiday clubs and after-school clubs.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and linked to targets for improving teachers' performance. The professional development of staff is supported by thorough induction and good access to training. As a result, the school has become a recognised centre of excellence in the field of special education.
- The local authority works in close partnership with the school. It has used the expertise of staff in the school to help provide training and support for other schools. Also, local authority officers have helped the school in judging the quality of teaching and checking data on the progress of pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a clear vision for the school and has received appropriate training to ensure that all its responsibilities, including safeguarding, are carried out as required.

The governing body holds senior leaders to account effectively and ensures the budget is managed prudently. It has a good grasp of the school's work, including the quality of teaching gained through detailed reports and visits to the school. Reports include information on pupils' attainment and evidence that the use of the pupil premium is helping students to catch up.

There is a suitable policy for the performance management of teachers and a committee of the governing body that considers salary progression. These arrangements ensure that additional allowances are linked closely to the school's appraisal of teachers.

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	113961
Local authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	403217

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Clarke
Headteacher	Stephen Brown
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 July 2008
Telephone number	01202 525107
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