

Kingsdown School

Snakes Lane, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6XT

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Pupils throughout the school make good progress in communication, reading, writing, mathematics and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in music and a significant number of pupils with physical disabilities make outstanding progress in physical skills, for example, learning to walk.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour consistently well and maintain excellent relationships with them.
- Staff make good use of signing, symbols and practical resources to stimulate and support pupils' learning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is at least good and often outstanding. Pupils always stay very safe in school and on visits.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing strong leadership and direction for the school in ensuring that pupils' well-being, learning and the quality of teaching are good.
- Governors make a good contribution to school improvement and are holding the school to account for its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always build on their prior learning.
- Subject leaders are not checking that staff always record the small steps of progress pupils make in their work books.
- Sometimes it is not possible to track the progress pupils are making in their books because staff do not consistently record the small gains in learning over time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons and saw all teachers. Twelve of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, looked at children’s work in the Early Years Foundation Stage and looked at samples of pupils work across the school with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils and informal discussions took place at lunchtime and break time with other pupils. Other meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the Early Years Foundation Stage co-ordinator, the music specialist, governors and the local authority representative.
- Inspectors looked at 31 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View and 38 questionnaire returns from the staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation including safeguarding policies, records of behaviour, attendance figures, the school’s summary self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings and information about pupils’ progress over time.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kingsdown School caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A significant number of pupils have physical disabilities with associated learning difficulties. Nearly all pupils have communication difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is high (47%). This is additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very small number of children in the Nursery attend alternative child care provision at *La Balon Rouge* and *Home From Home* in Southend for two days per week.
- The premises and accommodation have been refurbished since the last inspection. There is a new swimming pool, soft play area, dark room and extensive outdoor play equipment. The number of pupils on roll has greatly increased and the school is oversubscribed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the few remaining weaknesses in teaching, increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise achievement by making sure that:
 - all pupils build on their prior learning so that they always make systematic gains in knowledge, skills and understanding from their different starting points
 - the small steps of progress pupils make are consistently recorded in their books so that their progress over time can be clearly measured
 - subject leaders are rigorous in checking that the small steps of progress pupils make are always recorded in pupils' books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Evidence from school data, from pupils' books and learning seen in lessons show that, from their very low starting points on entry, pupils make good progress over time.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into their routines quickly and make good progress because staff maintain close links with parents and work effectively as a team.
- Pupils throughout the school make good progress, especially in communication, literacy skills and personal social and health education. This is because staff use signing and symbols and real objects consistently well to promote learning. Most pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and a significant number are making more than expected progress.
- All pupils make outstanding progress in music because the part-time music specialist provides exceptional opportunities for pupils to participate in singing and performing.
- Pupils with physical disabilities who are unable to walk make outstanding progress in learning to do so; staff work closely with physiotherapists and occupational therapist in challenging pupils to walk as independently as possible.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress because all adults work closely with individual pupils to develop their awareness and communication skills.
- Other groups of pupils, including the relatively more-able pupils, make good progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Those eligible for the pupil premium make the same good progress over time as their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics because good support is provided for their learning.
- More pupils are exercising and participating in swimming and soft play activities as a result of good use of primary school sport funding to support these activities.
- The very few children who attend other *La Balon Rouge* and *Home From Home* are making good progress.
- Pupils' books and assessment files show that, occasionally, pupils are not making systematic gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding from their different starting points. For example, one pupil working on subtraction and addition a year ago was working on lower level skills of sequencing different colours one month ago and did not build on the previous learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is good. Evidence from pupils' work and school data show that some teaching is outstanding and occasionally teaching requires improvement.
- Staff have excellent relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour consistently well. This

was also confirmed in discussion with pupils, in the responses to Parent View and in staff questionnaire returns. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and try their hardest.

- Music teaching is outstanding because the part-time teacher has the highest expectations for pupils' singing and performance, and consistently encourages and praises pupils as singers and musical performers. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development exceptionally well as they experience a sense of awe and wonder in music. They sing and perform exceptionally well together.
- Staff constantly set high expectations for pupils with physical disabilities who are unable to walk, providing them with walking frames and physical aids to encourage them to walk as independently as they can. As a result of this exceptional teaching, a significant number of these pupils learn to walk independently in a short space of time.
- Pupils' communication skills and their awareness when learning are strengthened by the good use made by all adults of signing, symbols, real life objects, soft toys and specialist resources, such as electronic switches. For example, each day of the week is colour coded so that Thursday is green and Friday is blue. Pupils know that it is Thursday or Friday because staff all wear an appropriately coloured polo shirt to represent that day and highlight the colour of the day in pupils' timetables. This increases pupils' awareness and understanding of their daily routines and enables them to feel secure in a predictable and dependable learning environment.
- Strong teamwork between all adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage, together with good quality resources such as the outdoor play equipment, enable children to enjoy their learning and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for the learning of different pupils, such as those eligible for pupil premium and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They use signing, communication aids, praise and encouragement consistently well to increase learning and develop communication.
- Assessment is used well to set individual targets and to track progress against these targets over time. However, occasionally, it is not possible to track the progress pupils are making in their books because staff are not consistently recording the small gains in learning. This makes it difficult for other staff, including subject leaders, to determine how much progress pupils are making over time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils settle quickly into their classroom routines. They respond exceptionally well to the school's code of conduct and its systems of rewards, which all staff implement consistently well. As a result, low-level disruption to learning is very rare and pupils with the most challenging behaviours learn self-control relatively quickly.
- Pupils are courteous to visitors and take great pride in their learning. They show the greatest respect for staff and greatly enjoy their learning, which was also confirmed by parents. This was particularly evidence in the whole-school singing led by the music specialist and the headteacher where all pupils sang with great enjoyment and to the very best of their ability.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage greatly enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well. This is because staff work closely as a team alongside parents to promote children's well-being and learning in school and at home.

- In discussion, different pupils said there was no bullying, which was also confirmed by parents in their Parent View returns. Pupils are developing an increasing awareness of the different forms of bullying.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All potential risks are rigorously assessed, including the two outside providers attended by the children in the Nursery. Pupils always wear protective clothing in practical activities, such as preparing and cooking food. They handle equipment safely and move safely from one area of the school to another.
- Most pupils, apart from those who are in hospital for long periods of time and those who require regular therapy, attend school regularly. On arrival at school, pupils cannot wait to start learning. This was seen in their happy smiling faces and their very warm responses to the staff who greeted them on arrival to school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is extremely well-respected by parents and the community for her relentless drive to provide the very best for all pupils. She receives very good support from the deputy headteacher. As a result, pupils' behaviour and safety are outstanding, and they are making good and sometimes outstanding progress. This is because senior leaders have ensured that teaching is good and they have greatly improved resources for learning since the last inspection.
- The management of staff performance is good. This has resulted in a significant reduction in weaknesses in teaching over time and an increase in the proportion of outstanding teaching since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders regularly check whole-school data and use this information with their own observations of learning in classrooms to identify clear points for development. Emerging weaknesses are addressed through support and training. Induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers are good.
- Subject leaders check pupils' books, individual assessment files and teachers' planning within their subjects. However, they are not rigorous enough in checking that the small steps of progress pupils make are always recorded in their books so that progress over time is consistently measured.
- Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures good provision so that children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The wide-ranging opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, with a strong emphasis on developing basic skills of communication, literacy, mathematics and personal social and health education, are a strength of the school. Communication, learning and enjoyment are promoted very effectively through the variety of after-school and lunchtime clubs. Visitors to school, such as Gemma's Farm and trips outside school to local parks, the sea shore and to London to see the production of *The Lion King*, all have a valuable impact on pupils' achievement.
- This range of experiences also contributes effectively to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral and social development as they often experience a sense of awe and wonder. Pupils have many excellent opportunities to reflect, share, take turns and distinguish between right and wrong. They deepen their awareness of different cultures and beliefs through their celebration of world

festivals, such as Chinese New Year, learning about different faiths such as Islam through art music and topic work.

- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to increase the participation for eligible pupils in all school activities and provide additional individual support for learning where needed. As a result, pupils increase their confidence and self-esteem so they achieve as well as their classmates. This also reflects the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Primary sport funding has been used well to provide additional coaches who work alongside staff to develop teaching skills and to purchase additional resources, such as soft play equipment. This has led to increased exercise and participation by pupils in sporting activities which has improved their health and well-being.
- The local authority has a fairly accurate view of the school's effectiveness and has maintained oversight of its work through regular visits to the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are ensuring that all legal requirements, especially those for safeguarding, are met. They regularly check that the procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors to work with children are robust. They ensure that policies to promote the welfare and safety of pupils are regularly reviewed, that all training is up-to-date, that all potential risks are assessed, and that additional measures are put in place to protect pupils, where necessary. Governors have a good understanding of their own strengths and areas for development. They have a good awareness of data and use this to challenge the work of the school. They hold the school to account for its additional spending of pupil premium and primary school sport funding in order to ensure good value for money. Through regular visits to school and from their scrutiny of information in the headteacher's reports, they have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning over time. Governors oversee the management of the headteacher's performance effectively. They ensure that salary increases are linked to good teaching and any underperformance is supported and, if necessary, dealt with effectively.

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	115442
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	425177

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	3–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Davies
Headteacher	Margaret Rimmer
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2010
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