

Seven Hills School

Granville Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S2 2RJ

Inspection dates 24–25 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Working together, the headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors have enabled the school to improve remarkably in all respects since its previous inspection.
- Students' achievement is exceptional. They make progress at a rapid rate, including in English and mathematics. Older students gain a wide range of qualifications.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The courses students follow are planned extremely carefully so they make outstanding progress in their learning and in important skills such as decision-making.
- Teachers are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They make sure that all groups of students have work that enables them to learn outstandingly well.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They are very eager to learn and to take part in the many exciting activities the school offers. Students feel very safe here and bullying is extremely rare.
- The school's numerous partnerships with colleges, training providers and the mainstream school with which it shares its site all extend the range of opportunities for students. They add considerably to students' learning and their personal development.
- By the time they leave school, students are confident young adults, prepared outstandingly well for the next stage in their lives.
- Leaders and governors are determined that the school will continue to improve and they know exactly how to achieve this. This includes developing students' skills further to check for themselves how well they are doing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons. Three of these were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with staff, students, a representative of the local authority, and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspectors took account of the four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's latest questionnaire to parents, completed in December 2012.
- A range of documents were examined, including assessments of students' progress, records relating to their behaviour and attendance, a variety of written policies, safeguarding documents, and the school's plans for its future development.

Inspection team

Rosemary Eaton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Henry Moreton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for students with a range of learning difficulties. Most have severe learning difficulties and a minority have profound and multiple learning difficulties and other complex needs including autistic spectrum disorder.
- All students have a statement in respect of their special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The school collaborates with the other special schools in the local authority through a soft federation.
- In September 2011 the school moved from its previous two sites to be co-located with a Catholic mainstream secondary school. Some facilities such as the dining room and parts of the grounds are shared.
- In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, most students follow some courses at colleges or with training providers and attend work experience placements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for students to judge how well they have learned and to identify the areas they need to work on.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The school has very high expectations regarding students' achievement and a large proportion of them make better progress than expected. Progress is outstanding in both English and mathematics.
- Most students use the sounds made by letters (phonics) to help them read words that are new to them. They learn that some words cannot be sounded out and have to be 'locked in your brain'. More-able students develop skills such as 'scanning' and understand how this will be useful in everyday life, for example, when looking for information in a newspaper.
- Their knowledge of phonics also helps students to write. More-able students in Years 7 and 8 sounded out words such as 'medicine', making an excellent effort to spell correctly.
- Some less-able students learn to link symbols to words. In a food technology lesson, more-able students read the words in their recipe while others appropriately used symbols to find out what to do next.
- Throughout the school there is a strong focus on students learning skills that will help them in everyday life. Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form use their reading and writing skills to read instructions and fill in forms.
- In mathematics, less-able students become aware of shapes and textures through activities that stimulate all their senses. More-able students learn skills such as doubling and measuring which they use in lessons such as design and technology.
- From Year 9 onwards, students start to gain qualifications in a variety of subjects and courses. More-able Year 11 students are successful in GCSE art and design. Currently, a group is working towards GCSE English.
- Sixth form students make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. They also develop a range of skills, such as the ability to organise themselves and their work, which they will need in their future lives. Students gain a range of qualifications, for example, in food studies and getting ready for starting work.
- When they leave school at the end of Year 11, 12 or 13, students all move on to college or training.
- The school's records show clearly that different groups of students make equally exceptional progress. For example, although less-able students move forward in very small steps, their progress is just as striking as that of those who are more-able.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make the same outstanding progress as other students in the school. The school looks at what support they each receive already and then offers more, for example, helping them to attend a club or residential visit.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers make much better use of the information they collect about each student's learning than they did at the time of the previous inspection. Work is demanding and is matched very closely to what particular students need to learn next. For example, in an English lesson for students in Years 9 and 10, less-able students chose an adjective to complete a sentence while the more able were asked to write three sentences of description.
- When choosing activities, teachers always take students' ages into account, as well as their stage of development. Consequently, sixth form students' work is highly relevant to their current and future needs. In one lesson, students viewed videos and considered the performance of candidates being interviewed for a job. They learned, for example, to make eye contact and smile, preparing them very well for mock interviews planned for the following lesson.
- Teachers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise. This enables them to provide excellent opportunities for students to practise skills such as reading and writing during lessons in other

subjects. In a history lesson, pupils in Years 7 and 8 discussed health care in the past and wrote down the questions they wanted to investigate.

- Teaching assistants play important roles in many lessons. Like teachers, they are skilled at asking questions that encourage students to think hard and put their ideas into words. Again, they expect students to do as much for themselves as they can. As one student remarked, 'I get plenty of support but my teachers don't do the work for me'.
- Some teachers have developed ways for students to judge how well they have learned and what they need to learn next or practise more. These opportunities enable students to see more clearly why activities are important and how they can help themselves learn. For example, Year 11 students knew what they were intended to learn during an English lesson and wrote down how well they had done and when they might use the skills they had learned. Leaders are keen for more lessons to involve students measuring their own progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students describe the school as 'really, really good' and 'brilliant' and are thrilled with the new building and classrooms. They are very keen to do well and extremely eager to join in lessons and activities.
- In lessons and around the school, students are polite and helpful and behave extremely well. They are considerate, for example, listening attentively when others are explaining their ideas and cooperating together when working in groups.
- Parents and staff confirm that students feel very safe in school. They learn to take some responsibility for their own safety. Older, more-able students travel to school and college independently because they understand how to stay safe.
- Records, which are kept meticulously, support students' view that bullying is extremely rare. Students know what is meant by bullying: if you were bullied, they said, 'you would get upset inside'. They know how they should respond for example if worried about internet messages, and are confident that staff would deal with the matter.
- Some students are trained as peer mediators. This means that they offer help if there are arguments at breaks and lunchtime. Some of the mediators explained that they are not allowed to take sides or gossip and that they would take the matter to an adult if necessary.
- A minority of students find it hard to manage their emotions and impulses and so outbursts of disruptive behaviour do occur. Records show that the number and severity of incidents often reduce greatly as students respond to the methods used by staff to help individuals to improve their behaviour.
- The excellent behaviour and sense of responsibility displayed by most students enables them to enjoy and benefit from opportunities such as work experience placements, college courses, residential visits, and lunchtime in the busy mainstream dining room. They are confident young people, self-aware and with ambitions for the future.
- The school checks carefully to ensure that students following college courses or on placements in the community are kept safe and that they attend and behave just as well as those on the school site.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- By ensuring that other leaders, staff and governors share her aspirations for the school and each student, the headteacher paved the way for remarkable improvements since the previous inspection. All aspects of the school have improved markedly. The headteacher describes the key to this as a 'relentless commitment to quality' and leaders keep all of the school's work in their spotlight to make sure it meets these high expectations.
- There are very clear and strong links between the rigorous checks on students' progress and the

quality of teaching, the plans for the school's future improvement and the arrangements for staff training and development. The rate of improvement since the previous inspection shows the effectiveness of these systems. For example, students' progress is accelerating year on year as staff benefit from training, coaching and sharing ideas with their colleagues.

- Information about pupils' progress is now used exceptionally well by leaders. For example, they successfully adjusted the curriculum in Year 10 to allow more time for English and mathematics when students' progress was seen to be slower than in other years.
 - The school goes the extra mile to ensure that students have equal opportunities. In the sixth form, for example, courses are frequently arranged for individual students because they have particular interests or strengths.
 - The curriculum has a great many significant features including the attention paid to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, Year 11 students were reminded that disabled people can take part in adventurous pursuits and encouraged not to make assumptions about different groups in society.
 - The local authority has no concerns about the school and hence does not provide a formal package of support. Its staff respond to requests for advice, for example, about training students to travel independently.
 - Some aspects of the school's work have been shared with and adopted by other special schools in Sheffield. Leaders and governors work alongside those of the co-located school, sharing staff training and providing opportunities for students from both schools to work and socialise together. Links with colleges and training providers are exceptional.
 - The arrangements to safeguard students meet government requirements. Staff are made aware of issues that relate particularly to disabled students and those with special educational needs.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely knowledgeable and active. They are well aware of the quality of teaching and the characteristics of the best lessons. They examine information about students' progress and compare this to national expectations so they know just how well the school is doing. Governors are very well informed about the use of performance management. Again, they have looked at the national standards that teachers are expected to reach and satisfied themselves that the quality of each teacher's work is linked to their pay and their responsibilities. Governors know that support is offered to teachers who wish to improve aspects of their work.
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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	135287
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	402682

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Williams
Headteacher	Clare Scott
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
Telephone number	0114 274 3560
Fax number	0114 276 5371
Email address	cscott@sevenhills.sheffield.sch.uk

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