

Wren Spinney Community Special School

Westover Road, Off Westhill Drive, Kettering, NN15 7LB

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

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.

- Achievement is outstanding. Students make rapid progress over time from their very low starting points.
- Progress in communication, literacy and numeracy is at least good and for most students it is outstanding.
- Students of all ages are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage. All move into the sixth form at the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress in independent learning, social skills, functional skills, work related learning and preparation for life.
- Teaching throughout the school has improved and it is outstanding. It enables students to make outstanding progress. Teachers have high expectations for students' learning and ensure different students are given activities which they can do and which also makes them think hard. They have excellent relationships with students and create a very positive atmosphere for learning in their classrooms.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy learning and the attendance of most students is above average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- The headteacher provides visionary leadership and is supported very well by senior leaders. They have sustained outstanding provision since the previous inspection and have now raised the quality of teaching to outstanding. They have also developed leadership responsibilities across the school. This has enabled further improvements in assessment in the range of subjects and in the sixth form.
- Senior leaders check teaching and learning rigorously. They now plan to build on the outstanding quality through giving teachers more opportunities to share their expertise with each other.
- The governing body provides robust support for the school and is rigorous in holding leaders to account for students' learning and wellbeing and for the quality of teaching. Together with school leaders, they demonstrate excellent capacity for further consolidation and improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by nine teachers, including observations in some of the offsite alternative provision. Of these, 10 were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard students read and looked at samples of students’ work jointly with a subject leader.
- Meetings and informal discussions took place with three groups of students. Meetings were also held with senior leaders, four members of the governing body, and other leaders including the transition leader, the leader for communication, language and literacy and the leader for profound and multiple learning difficulties. A telephone discussion took place with the local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 18 parents expressed in the school’s most recent survey of parents and held telephone discussions with a small number of parents as there were too few responses to the online survey Parent View for an analysis to be made. They also looked at the responses on 12 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of school documentation, including safeguarding policies and procedures, attendance figures, records of behaviour, minutes of the governing body’s meetings, the school’s self-evaluation documents. Inspectors also examined the school’s records of students’ progress and achievement since the previous inspection, including for those in the sixth form, jointly with the senior assistant headteacher.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Karin Heap	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wren Spinney caters for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. A high proportion of students have autistic spectrum disorder, most have communication difficulties and some have complex learning difficulties or medical needs.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs as none are supported at school action or school action plus.
- Most students are White British and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is the additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care or from families where a parent is in the armed forces.
- Approximately half of the students attend alternative providers, for part of their education. These include, *The Shop* and *The Studio* managed by the school in Kettering, which provide opportunities for students to engage in work-related learning and partnership working with other local mainstream and special schools. These also include Friars, Greenfields and Billing Brook special schools within the Northamptonshire special schools consortium.
- The school has very recently been awarded Teaching School status in conjunction with five other special schools by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a significant increase in the sixth form, the school has established *The Studio* and is part of the Northamptonshire special schools consortium and a new Chair of governors is in post.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the outstanding teaching and learning through giving teachers the opportunity to share their expertise by working with different ability groups and year groups across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' achievement has improved since the previous inspection and it is now outstanding. Accurate and robust records of progress over time show that all students, from their very low starting points, make at least good progress and many make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. They also make outstanding progress in humanities subjects, music and physical education, across the school.
- At Key Stage 3, progress is good and a significant number of students make outstanding progress in English, mathematics, personal social and health education. This progress builds as students move through the school.
- At Key Stage 4, the majority of students make outstanding progress across a range of subjects and towards their examination courses. All meet the expected levels of progress by the end of Year 11 and the majority exceed this in English, mathematics, and science. Every student transfers to the sixth form, being very well prepared for this move.
- As at the previous inspection, students in the sixth form make outstanding progress in independent learning, social skills, functional skills, work related learning and preparation for life because they have first-hand experiences of the working environment in *The Shop* and *The Studio* and enter for highly relevant qualifications. For example, all students successfully gain a range of qualifications including employability skills, customer care, and functional literacy, numeracy and communication skills. They make outstanding progress in using and applying work place and independence skills, growing in confidence by serving customers who visit *The Shop* and *The Studio* in the centre of Kettering. Students apply their mathematical skills through stock taking, counting and banking money, giving change to customers. They develop communication and literacy skills by greeting customers, listening to them and serving them courteously. They all make outstanding progress in their Aspiration, Inspiration and Motivation (AIM) and 'Towards Independence' awards.
- Over the last three years, all students have successfully transferred to further education, training, day or residential care and sustained these placements over time.
- Students who attend the schools within the Northamptonshire special schools consortium make outstanding progress in animal care and sports at Billing Brook, in hospitality at Greenfields and in sports, leisure and design technology at Friars.
- The school's accurate data shows that all groups of students, including those with more complex needs and medical conditions, those with communication difficulties and the very few learning English as an additional language make at least good and often outstanding progress. Students with autism spectrum disorder make outstanding progress in communication, language and literacy and in science. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are making outstanding progress in most subjects. More able students do particularly well. All make outstanding progress in both English and mathematics, achieving their challenging targets. This is because they are given tasks which they can do and which challenge their thinking. They also receive excellent support for their learning from highly skilled teaching assistants.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium make the same progress as their classmates in communication, reading, writing and mathematics because they benefit greatly from the additional support they receive in literacy and numeracy by teaching assistants who enable them to catch up very quickly.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The school's rigorous and robust monitoring of teaching since the last inspection shows that the quality of teaching has improved significantly, moving from mainly good with some outstanding, to mostly outstanding with some good. This is also reflected in the school's tracking of students' progress over time, in the views of parents and in discussion with students.
- Students are totally absorbed in learning and consistently acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly and securely because teachers have high expectations for learning and ensure students are given tasks which they can do and which challenge their thinking.
- The strong climate for learning in all classrooms throughout the school and excellent relationships between staff and students ensure that all students try their hardest to succeed and remain focused on their learning in every lesson.
- Outstanding teaching in the sixth form ensures that all students make outstanding progress from their different starting points. In a food technology lesson, students were highly motivated and showed great pride in making chocolate biscuits for Mother's Day.
- Consistent use of signs, symbols, electronic switches and real objects for students to refer to, by all staff, ensure that students communicate consistently well. Typically, teachers choose methods that trigger students' immediate involvement. For example in a Key Stage lesson, students with very little speech, responded really well to adults signing, 'Why do you want to sit there?' and 'What would like to eat?' by signing, 'I would like toast and marmite'. In a Key Stage 4 reading lesson, students used signs and symbols very well, to retell the story and describe the characters in Roald Dahl's '*Fantastic Mr Fox*' story.
- Outstanding teaching and support for students for pupils eligible for pupil premium and those with different disabilities and special educational needs such as those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder enables them to make rapid progress in learning. Teachers are adept at linking what students have just learned to the next steps throughout the lessons, to enable them to learn even more.
- The teaching of basic skills of communication, language, literacy and numeracy permeates across the school and is very well promoted through a range of subjects and activities, such as art geography, science and personal, social and health education,. This enables students to make rapid progress in these skills and to use and apply them in real life situations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning across the school, which is having a very strong impact on the progress they are making. They always arrive at lessons very eager to learn, they listen very carefully to staff and respond extremely well to staff instructions.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is at least good and often outstanding because staff manage behaviour very effectively, particularly by communicating expectations for good behaviour consistently through signing, the use of pictures and other means of communication and by maintaining excellent relationship with students. No instances of low level disruption were seen, which is consistent with the school's records of behaviour over time. School records show that students with challenging behaviours

make rapid progress in self-control and outstanding progress in their behaviour over time.

- Students said there was no bullying, which is consistent with the schools' records of behaviour and the views of parents and staff. Given their severe and complex disabilities and special educational needs, different students are developing an increasing awareness of how to prevent bullying.
- Students have excellent relationship with all adults and each other as seen in the spontaneous way they applaud and celebrate success of others in assembly. They show respect and are very eager to greet visitors.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All offsite activities including school trips, work experience placements and alternative provisions, such as Friars School, Billing Brook School and The Studio are thoroughly assessed for potential risks to students. Regular liaison on a daily basis with these providers ensures students safety and well-being is fully protected. Students stay very safe and observe health and safety in the work place, for example, handling hair dressing equipment safely in *The Studio* and using computers safely in school. Parents, staff and students believe that all students are safe in school.
- Most students, apart from those with medical needs or who are undergoing therapy or treatment in hospital attend very regularly. In discussion, parents said that their children really miss school during holiday periods.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has sustained her visionary leadership of the school since the previous inspection and has the full support of her highly effective leadership team in driving developments forward. Under this excellent direction, leaders have developed a highly relevant range of subjects to be taught, robust systems of assessment and outstanding teaching and learning throughout the school. As a result, the work of the school in meeting the needs of different students is highly regarded within the local community. The school promotes equality of opportunity extremely well and prevents discrimination of any kind.
- The impact of teaching on learning is regularly and rigorously monitored by senior leaders and teachers with whole school leadership responsibilities, such as communication and literacy. Leaders use the national guidance on the teaching standards to make accurate judgements on the impact of teaching on the learning of different groups of students. This has led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection with most teaching being judged as outstanding and none requiring improvement.
- There are very good opportunities for professional development where teachers are provided with good support to ensure their teaching is outstanding. The school has plans to build on this further by giving teachers the opportunity to share their expertise and so spread their best practice by working with different ability groups and year groups across the school.
- The subjects and experiences provided are very well planned to provide a rich range of highly meaningful learning experiences for all students. There is a successful emphasis on building students' confidence, and developing the basic skills of communication language, literacy and numeracy within real life contexts. Throughout the school, the experiences on offer focus well on developing skills for life, highly relevant qualifications and personal social health education. This prepares students thoroughly for the next stage of their lives.

- Outstanding leadership in the sixth form has led to the provision of meaningful and highly relevant work-related learning through *The Shop* where students sell a wide range of sweets and the newly created learning base, *The Studio*, in the town centre, where students apply work and vocational skills in hair and beauty and have just completed a crèche facility where customers who attend the salon in *The Studio* can leave their children while they have their nail manicured or their hair done.
- Students' spiritual moral social and cultural development is promoted very effectively through the celebration of success at every opportunity which rapidly builds students' confidence and through excellent opportunities to interact with the local community. Students learn appreciation of different cultures and religious traditions, through art, the celebration of festivals and in religious education.
- Leaders make very good use of pupil premium funding to provide additional and small group support to develop the basic skills of communication, language and literacy and a family support and funding for after-school clubs.
- The local authority have recently carried out a rigorous review of the school's work and provided further training and support for governors in financial management and in recruitment and selection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors provide good support for staff and good oversight of the work of school leaders. They visit the school regularly and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact of the learning of different groups of students. They are ensuring the school provides good value for money by, for example, asking challenging questions about the use of the pupil premium funding and using data effectively to support their views. They have also recently appointed a governor with exclusive responsibility for the oversight of this spending. Governors ensure that the management of the headteacher's performance is rigorous and that objectives for improving staff performance are linked to objectives set for improving the headteacher's performance. They also ensure that good teaching is rewarded. Governors are rigorous in ensuring safeguarding requirements are fully in place, through regular visits to school, in updating policies and in checking that all potential risks are assessed when students are learning out of school.

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	122158
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	431590

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	60
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anja Sacke
Headteacher	Debbie Withers
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2011
Telephone number	01536 481939
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