

The Wyvern School

Great Chart Bypass, Ashford TN23 4ER

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning as well as in their social skills and achieve well. The school's focus on improving skills in literacy, mathematics and other life skills is very effective.
- All groups of pupils make similar progress overall, although there are some differences between individuals; some pupils make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is mainly good and some is outstanding. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The sixth form is good. Students respond well to opportunities to develop their independence skills and gain useful accreditation.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an excellent start to school life.
- Pupils are considerate and respectful to one another in and out of lessons. They feel safe in school and those who experience difficulties learn to manage their behaviour well over time.
- The leadership team have managed a period of change well and have a clear plan for continuing improvement. The governing body supports and challenges the school well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The use of signing and symbols to support communication is not yet consistent in every class.
- When monitoring lessons and managing the performance of teachers, senior leaders sometimes fail to place enough emphasis on the impact of teaching on pupil's progress.
- The impact of new initiatives is not always evaluated and responded to quickly enough to ensure that the school is improving as quickly as it can.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 teachers teaching 22 lessons; three of these were joint observations with members of the school’s senior team.
- Inspectors joined pupils at lunch times, talked to them in class and heard a small group of pupils read individually.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. A discussion was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View) and the 72 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at and considered a number of documents. These included the school’s self-evaluation and its development plan, arrangements for safeguarding and promoting equality, and details of the curriculum.

Inspection team

Anne Duffy, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jackie Blunt	Additional inspector
Peter Gabony	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized special school, which, until recently, occupied two sites. The primary department moved into a new building adjoining the rest of the school in September 2012.
- The school includes pupils at all key stages, a nursery and a further education (FE) department. Pupils join the school at different stages of their school career.
- All pupils have statements of special educational needs; the largest groups are those with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum condition. Other groups are those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. A few pupils have sensory or physical needs.
- There are approximately twice as many boys as girls.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The senior leadership team is the headteacher and two deputy headteachers, one of whom was appointed in July 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching in all classes matches that of the best by:
 - consistently meeting the communication needs of every pupil in every lesson
 - making full use of the monitoring of teaching and learning to evaluate the progress made by pupils in lessons and linking this consistently to the performance management process.
- Consistently review the impact of new initiatives in order to further accelerate the rate of school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress overall, and some make outstanding progress, through the P levels and the early levels of the National Curriculum.
- As they move through the school, pupils' good achievement is supported well by the development of work-related skills and an appropriate focus on the key areas of literacy, numeracy and communication. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils show a real interest in books and stories. For example, primary pupils greatly enjoyed reading 'The Gingerbread Man' as a class, taking every opportunity to read individually and help each other where necessary. By the time they reach the end of their secondary education, many pupils are able to make good use of different methods of communication to tackle new vocabulary with confidence.
- Increasingly careful analysis allows senior leaders to identify any gaps in progress and raise expectations for groups or individuals who may be disadvantaged. Additional funding has been used well to raise achievement for targeted pupils. Staff are aware of the particular needs of the girls as a minority group but there is no significant difference between their achievement and that of boys.
- The school is having increasing success with the growing number of students with autistic spectrum condition and they make good progress over time. However, in the lessons where their communication needs are not consistently met or tasks are not linked sufficiently well to pupils' abilities, these pupils in particular are inclined to lose interest and hence not make as much progress as they could.
- In the further education department, students benefit from strong links with local colleges and work experience providers to develop a range of skills. They are actively involved in building up portfolios of work that demonstrate good, and often outstanding, progress. All students gain accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation awards and, where appropriate, GCSEs.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress due to the careful way in which all staff encourage them to try new experiences and extend their understanding of the world. For example, one little boy was encouraged to explore a toy car which had been left outside and was full of rain water. Skilful discussion and encouragement led to great enjoyment and extended conversation when the water was tipped out, and very early scientific concepts about volume and capacity were explored.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils benefit from the very good relationships that they have with the teaching and support staff. Skilful teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage matches children's interests and extends their learning very well so that they make a positive early start to their school life.
- The school's focus on extending the range of teaching approaches means that teachers generally make effective use of a range of pictures, objects and sounds to encourage choice and support learning. Staff who are new to the school have also brought new ideas which help to challenge previously established ways of teaching.
- The most effective lessons occur when activities match the full range of abilities so that all pupils make at least good progress. For example, pupils working on number bonds found the planned activities engrossing and worked well together using different resources, considering between them whether their answers were correct or not and corrected them if necessary.
- All staff are committed to the use of communication approaches which are suited to the needs of each pupil. Where staff are confident in the use of signing, there is a marked impact upon the development of their pupils' communication skills, and pupils show a real sense of achievement when they master a new word, sign or use a symbol. In some

lessons, however, supportive methods of communication are used inconsistently and progress is slower.

- Teaching assistants know the pupils well and often intervene skilfully to ensure that pupils' involvement in lessons is maintained effectively. However, time is sometimes wasted while pupils wait for each other to take turns or when some finish a task ahead of others. On these occasions, teaching assistants are too focused on maintaining pupils' behaviour rather than introducing a new task or activity, and opportunities for learning are missed.
- Teaching makes a strong contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. From the early stages, they learn to be aware of others, and develop a growing understanding of other people's lives and cultures. They benefit greatly from the opportunities to perform and work together in, for example, the very well-taught music lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- With a small number of exceptions, parents, carers and staff agree that there is a high standard of behaviour in the school.
- Pupils have evident trust in the adults working with them so that they feel very safe. Instances of bullying, including any racist or gender-based comments, are rare and are taken very seriously if they do occur. Good contact is made with external agencies, as well as parents and carers, to provide effective support for pupils both in and out of school.
- Following a monitoring inspection which took place in 2011, the school has taken steps to improve the way in which pupils are helped to manage and improve their behaviour. As a result, responses to pupils with behaviour difficulties are now more consistent and effective. Occasionally, when the communication needs of pupils who find it difficult to express themselves verbally are not immediately met, disruptive behaviour occurs. However, this is quickly and safely dealt with.
- The school's emphasis on building self-esteem and creating strong relationships is very effective. Pupils mix very well together and are highly supportive of each other. They clearly enjoy the opportunities provided by the school for them to work and play together. These opportunities range from bee-keeping to the school's version of the popular television show, the 'W' factor. Opportunities to join in with the Olympic spirit as spectators at the Olympic Torch relay and other Olympic events did much to raise ambition and determination.
- With the few exceptions that are explained by health needs, students attend school regularly. Older students develop a strong sense of responsibility. Independent skills learnt through outings, work experience and the FE flat stand them in good stead for the future.
- The school's nursery provides a safe and enjoyable environment in which young children develop skills and attitudes to learning which support their successful transfer to Reception or another local school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and staff are committed to creating equality of opportunity, tackling any discrimination and improving life-chances for their pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure across the different departments and attendance is monitored well.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate framework for the development of pupils' learning and interests as they move through the school. Recent changes to the post-16 curriculum have provided improved opportunities for all to gain accreditation.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective.
- Good processes and systems for evaluating the work of the school have been put in place. However, some processes have become over-complicated. For example, the system in place for the management of teachers' performance is very thorough and encompasses pupil progress, professional development and the school's identified areas for improvement. However, agreed objectives are not always stated clearly enough to ensure that the

teachers' responsibility for improving the learning of the pupils is clear. Similarly, senior leaders' observations and teachers' own evaluation of lessons sometimes focus too strongly on what the teacher is doing rather than what the pupils are learning.

- The school has taken positive steps to meet the widening range of needs of the pupils and much whole-school training has taken place or is planned. However, the impact of these initiatives is not always evaluated quickly enough and the pace of improvement, particularly in whole-school approaches to communication, is not as swift as it could be.
- The school has worked hard to establish a positive position in the local community. The introduction of class coffee mornings has increased opportunities for parents and carers to become involved in the life of the school.
- The senior leadership team has faced a number of challenges over the past two years, as their vision for the school's future in one building on one site has become realised. There is now good capacity for continuing improvement as 'one school'.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- provides a good balance of challenge and support to the headteacher and the school
 - has been very effective in liaising with the local authority as the planned change in accommodation and provision has taken place
 - has a clear understanding of its responsibilities and the strengths and areas for development of the school.
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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	131748
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403835

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Campbell W. Miller
Headteacher	David Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2011
Telephone number	01233 621302
Fax number	01233 660621
Email address	mailbox@wyvernschool.com

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