

Treetops School

Buxton Road, Grays, RM16 2WU

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The inspirational headteacher and very strong senior and middle leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have used this knowledge to secure rapid improvements to the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' achievements.
- All staff work to produce the very best outcomes for pupils.
- The very experienced governing body both supports the school's work and challenges senior leaders to improve it even more. Governors question the leadership carefully as to how it is improving teaching and how well pupils are doing.
- Staff place a high priority on pupils' well-being so that they are ready and eager to learn. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff which are mutually respectful and build pupil's confidence and trust. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons are outstanding. They enjoy school and take part in lessons and activities with great enthusiasm
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Across the school pupils make excellent progress in all subjects. In addition to a range of GCSEs and other accredited courses, pupils in the secondary phase and in the sixth form access an excellent range of vocational qualifications which help to ensure that they are well prepared to continue their education.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils can achieve and use practical activities to make learning interesting.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students are extremely well prepared for their next steps with an increasing focus on life skills and becoming independent. This helps to develop their confidence alongside skills that prepare them exceptionally well for adult life.
- Parents and carers are very complimentary about the school. They are full of admiration for the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff and the work they do to help their children learn.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons the majority of which were jointly observed with senior staff. In addition, they visited 10 classes across the school as part of a learning walk.
- Meetings were held with teachers, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the Local Authority, and the school council.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised including safeguarding and attendance, behaviour, school development planning, lesson planning, information regarding teaching over time and subject development.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and displays in classrooms and around the school. Several pupils were also heard reading during lessons.
- The team took account of 41 responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own questionnaire and a letter sent in by a parent. The responses of 64 staff to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector
Sa'ad Khaldi	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Treetops is a large mixed day, community special school which provides mainly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties although many pupils have complex learning needs. An increasingly significant number of pupils have autism, speech and communication difficulties and developmental delay.
- The school was designated as a Teaching School in March 2012. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and the school is a National Support School. A range of training and support is provided to other schools in the local authority area and more widely.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which specify complexity of need and levels of attainment.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- A third of the school's pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils) which is well above that found nationally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend communications with parents so that they are fully informed about all aspects of the school's work including the topics that pupils study and day-to-day activities they take part in.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are passionate in their commitment to meeting pupils' individual needs. They have established a corporate culture in which all staff strive to ensure that every child succeeds and achieves to their full potential. This has enabled the school to sustain and build on outstanding practice found in previous inspections.
- Highly effective and robust arrangements for managing the performance of teachers, which are closely linked to the national teachers' standards, are in place. The monitoring of teaching through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and pupil progress meetings is rigorous and robust. Valuable and highly effective support is provided where any weaknesses in teaching are identified. This has led to sustained excellence in teaching since the last inspection.
- Very able senior and middle leaders carefully record and track the progress of individual pupils, and of different groups within the school, and ensure rapid interventions are put in place should a pupil's progress falter. The well-being and achievement of each pupil are at the heart of the school's work. Every child has an equal opportunity to succeed. There is no discrimination.
- The school has worked with several other primary and secondary special and mainstream schools to ensure their assessments of pupils' learning are accurate. Although many of the pupils are working at a level of attainment that falls below that measured by the National Curriculum, the school is reviewing its assessment practices as a result of the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- Every pupil across the school, from Year 1 to the sixth form, greatly benefits from individualised programmes of study. This has a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and their personal, social and health education. In addition pupils study topics that span all National Curriculum subjects. These are adapted extremely well to pupils' current learning needs and capabilities and bespoke programmes are devised to meet the needs of individuals. In many instances these programmes involve close working with therapists and other agencies.
- Pupils are grouped by age, but at Key Stage 3 and 4 they are set for English and mathematics to ensure that they are all able to achieve appropriate and relevant external accreditation. Sixth form students are extremely well-prepared for the next steps with an increasing focus on life skills. They take part in work experience and are rapidly gaining credits and certification in appropriate work related courses. Careers information and guidance are provided to help pupils gain knowledge of their options, and the skills needed for training and future employment. Virtually all pupils go on to further education, training or employment.
- The curriculum and day to day activities have a very positive impact on the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and on their readiness to take their place in modern Britain. An extensive range of enrichment activities, trips and residential visits support pupils' achievement and personal development. As pupils progress through the school they take on, and exercise, responsibility with maturity, work well together, show initiative and take advantage of the many opportunities provided to extend their social and cultural experiences.
- The additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils as well as Year 7 'catch-up' funding has been used effectively to provide additional literacy and numeracy support to individual pupils and to enable them to participate in a range of enrichment activities. This has had a positive impact on their self-esteem and confidence and as a result has narrowed the achievement gap between them and their peers. This means the gap has almost closed.
- The school is using its primary sport funding effectively. This has given pupils greater access to specialist coaching which has increased their skills in a variety of sports.
- The school works exceptionally well in partnership with local mainstream schools and local businesses to

extend learning opportunities, particularly for the sixth form students. The school also has excellent relationships with a range of agencies, including therapists.

- The school works closely with parents to help them support their child's learning at home. The school is aware that the quality of information that parents and others receive about the curriculum and the day-to-day activities that the pupils take part in is rather limited.
- The local authority knows the great strengths of the school and values the work of the outreach service in supporting other schools in the area. Partner schools cannot speak highly enough of the support given by the headteacher and the contributions made by the very skilled outreach staff who help them to develop their own expertise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wealth of professional expertise to their role in supporting the school and very much see their role in determining the strategic vision for the school. They are determined that Treetops should not only meet the needs of the pupils attending the school but should provide a range of activities during and after the school day for young people and adults with special educational needs in the local authority.
 - Governors are actively involved in the school and are known to all staff as they visit frequently. They are very well aware of the strengths of the school and liaise with the local authority to discuss plans for future expansion both for nursery aged children and Post-19 students.
 - Through looking at data, governors are clear about the school's effectiveness and they check that the spending of the pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress of pupils for whom it is intended.
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They ensure that all safeguarding measures are in place and working efficiently and that all health and safety procedures are adhered to.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of how the school promotes tolerance and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. They place great value on pupils' understanding about democracy, human values and consideration for others.
 - The governing body is kept well informed about the quality of teaching and pupil progress. Governors know how the school rewards strong teaching and understands its systems for tackling any underperformance should this arise. They hold the school to account very well by examining, challenging and questioning the data and information they receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their work and their eagerness to participate in lessons and other school activities. Attendance is now above average and reflects the effectiveness of strategies the school has used to ensure improvement since the last inspection.
- Relationships between all staff and pupils throughout the school are excellent. Staff know and value pupils as individuals and pupils in turn learn to treat one another with kindness and respect. Pupils are happy and relaxed in school.
- Pupils on the student council were able to talk to inspectors about how to keep themselves safe. They know about different forms of bullying but stated that there is 'no bullying in this school' and the school records confirm this.
- School leaders carefully monitor behaviour and a great deal has been done to develop staff's skills in managing pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, some of whom exhibit very challenging behaviour. On-going training is provided to enable all staff to be proficient in meeting the particular needs of individual pupils.
- The school provides a stimulating environment for learning. Pupils are very proud of their work including

work that is on display both in their classrooms and around the school. They are very keen to show their work to visitors.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The high quality care and support the school provides ensures that pupils feel very safe and have trusting relationships with staff. Pupils say that the staff and their friends at school help them to feel safe at school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and robust. Risk assessments for both on-site and off-site activities are thorough and detailed and staff and visitors are carefully vetted to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils in the school and sixth form students were very clear about how to keep themselves safe when using computers or when out in the local community.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstandingly positive relationships between all adults and pupils support learning and underpin the excellent progress made by the pupils.
- All staff have high expectations and promote learning extremely well. Pupils show very high levels of engagement in their learning and have excellent attitudes towards all activities in and out of the classroom. This is because the school tailors teaching so well to meet pupils' needs and abilities and this enables them to make excellent progress.
- Strong teamwork and the effective deployment of teaching assistants helps to ensure that support is given where needed, that pupils are successfully challenged and that they feel safe to take risks when learning and sometimes learn from make mistakes.
- Teachers maintain detailed records of the small steps in understanding which pupils make. This enables them to build successfully on the pupils' earlier learning and helps them to set tasks that are relevant and engaging. Opportunities for self-assessment are also effectively used to inform the next steps in learning.
- Pupils are engaged in learning in environments that are purposeful, extremely well organised and well resourced. Lessons are very interesting, fun and enjoyable. The very rich questioning that takes place not only helps the teacher to check on pupils' prior knowledge but enables pupils to develop their thinking and reasoning skills so that they all make gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use correct terminology within lessons which enables the pupils to develop their own skills, knowledge and understanding from the tasks that are set. Adults make sure the pupils understand when they have done well and how they can improve their work so that they can make the best possible progress.
- Sensitive and well-targeted questioning by all adults based on knowledge of pupils' interests, strengths and weaknesses means that all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed.
- Literacy, numeracy and communication are taught very effectively, including when these skills are planned as part of other subjects or areas of learning.
- Students in the sixth form are taught exceptionally well. This means that they develop key skills very successfully.
- Work in books is well-presented and pupils are given constructive comments about what they have done well and how improvements to their work can be made. Consequently, they know what they need to do to progress further.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- All pupils are assessed in depth when they join the school so that progress can be measured from starting points. The school has developed a system which provides detailed information for teachers. Teachers use this very effectively for targeting work at the right level for every pupil including those in the verbal behaviour (VB) classes whose progress is measured in very small steps.
- As a result of outstanding teaching and highly effective and individual support pupils learn exceptionally well. Pupils at Key Stages 1-4 and students in the sixth form, including those with autism, speech and language difficulties and developmental delay, make significant and sustained progress.
- The increasing numbers of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make outstanding progress. This is because staff are highly skilled and provide an environment where precision teaching and a very high level of support ensures that pupils are able to focus on their work and make continuous progress.
- The work seen in books and assessment profiles, together with visits to lessons, show that pupils make outstanding progress across different subjects. Pupils make outstanding progress in communication as a result of highly effective support and joint planning by teachers and speech and language therapists. They make exceptional progress in personal, social and health education because this permeates the life of the school and is seen in pupils' rapidly growing self-confidence and their eagerness to participate in all activities.
- More-able pupils make excellent progress in all areas of learning. For example, pupils have regular opportunities to develop their reading skills and those who read aloud to inspectors showed a clear understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make). More-able pupils become confident readers often reading with understanding and expression.
- Throughout the school pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. Attainment is different for each pupil because of their different needs but each individual makes outstanding progress in relation to their often complex needs.
- The school's analysis of data shows that there is no discernible difference between the attainment of different groups within the school. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 3 the gap between the attainment of those in receipt of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding and their peers has narrowed and has almost closed because of the excellent support they receive.
- By Year 11, pupils have made outstanding progress. In the summer of 2014 the majority of the pupils gained 5 A* - G GCSE passes and all gained recognised qualifications that demonstrated outstanding progress from their starting points. They also made outstanding progress in work-related learning and in developing skills such as road safety and shopping. The more-able students progressed to college to follow foundation courses and some joined the school sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form make excellent progress in developing skills to help them through life and learning about the world of work. Through their team enterprise activities, such as running a café and a valeting service, they are able to apply their skills and knowledge in a practical way. By the time they leave, all students gain recognised qualifications in Functional English, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal and social education. Students have a high level of success in moving on to college when they leave Treetops.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The school is relentless in its work to improve and develop opportunities for students. Staff have high aspirations when developing students' skills and building their confidence so that they actively contribute to the community. Resources to support

this are excellent and used very well.

- The achievement of the students in the sixth form is outstanding due to outstanding teaching over time. This leads to excellent attitudes to learning enabling all students, including those with autism, disadvantaged students and relatively more able, to make excellent progress academically, socially and personally. The quality of the students' work and the school's attainment data reflect the outstanding teaching which students receive. Individual plans identify targets that are regularly reviewed and ensure that all students are challenged to achieve as well as they are able.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning, make outstanding progress in their behaviour and do their very best to stay as safe as possible with varying levels of adult support. Students are exceptionally confident and cooperative, helpful and supportive towards one another. They gain great enjoyment from the activities the school provides and take pride in their work for instance, organising and running the sixth form café.
- The matching of learning programmes to the aspirations of individual students and the way they are prepared for the next stage in their education are exemplary.

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	115454
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	448140

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	5-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Peaford
Headteacher	Paul Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
Telephone number	01375 372723
Fax number	01375 898669
Email address	headteacher@treetops.thurrock.sch.uk

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