

Littledown School

Queen's Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3QW

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

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

- All groups of pupils, including those with additional special needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well during their time at the school. Achievement in English, mathematics and personal development is good.
- Teaching is good which means that most pupils make at least the progress expected of them and often make good progress. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are challenged so that they work quickly and extend their skills.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils really value the 'points' system and there are many excellent examples of pupils' behaviour improving quickly once children start at the school. Pupils say they feel safe.
- Strong leadership by the headteacher results in a clear vision and an accurate view of the school's performance. Leaders have maintained the good outcomes since the last inspection.
- Efficient planning by the governing body means money is spent well for the benefit of all groups of pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for premium funding.
- High quality training includes a strong focus on managing and improving the performance of all staff.
- Excellent behaviour support and training, provided by the schools' outreach teams for pupils from other Slough primary schools, has resulted in no permanent exclusions of any primary aged pupils across the borough for the past few years.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a very few lessons teachers do not provide challenging enough tasks for each pupil and at these times their learning dips.
- Monitoring by some middle managers and support for staff is not robust enough to bring about further improvements in teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, all of them jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector listened to some pupils read and looked at samples of their work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers and pupils. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative and a headteacher from a local school that receives outreach behaviour support.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' work.
- The inspector took account of the school's own parent survey because there were too few responses to the on-line survey (Parent View). The inspector also took account of the school's own staff questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Littledown is a smaller-than-average-size special school for primary-aged pupils with challenging behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. Many pupils also have associated learning difficulties, predominantly because of past absences from school.
- A few have additional special educational needs, mainly autism spectrum disorders.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is high.
- Most pupils are White British but a few come from ethnic minority backgrounds, although no pupils speak English as an additional language. There are far more boys than girls.
- The school provides outreach behaviour support to many local primary schools.
- The school provides a three-week course, six times a year, for local primary children who are in danger of being excluded from their mainstream schools.
- Mobility into and out of the school is high.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils are always challenged by the work they are set so that they maximise their achievement in every lesson by:
 - planning tasks that fully meet the varying needs and abilities of each pupil in the class
 - establishing robust mentoring and monitoring processes of teaching and learning by all middle managers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well from typically low starting points. By Year 6 the vast majority has made the progress expected of all pupils nationally. Pupils improve their learning and behaviour during their time at the school, making good progress in English and mathematics, and in their personal development.
- Progress in reading and writing is good. Pupils read regularly and were keen to read to the inspector. They explained that when they have completed three hours of reading over a period of time they receive a voucher to spend on a book to take home. They really value this incentive. A boy in Year 3 said that he bought a sticker book with his voucher which was 'really good'. Older pupils use their writing skills well in the range of subjects that they study.
- Pupils make the best progress in mathematics. They enjoy the practical aspects of the subject in particular. This was evident in Year 4 where pupils were practising division of numbers. Because of the teacher's clear explanations and a well-chosen demonstration, pupils were able to quickly make the link between division and multiplication, working with good accuracy on the challenging tasks set.
- Good achievement is also evident in Reception and Year 1 where high expectations lead to work that stretches pupils as they use 'junk' to make sculptures. Showing his work at the end of the session to the class, one boy said 'I have used cylinders and cuboids in my model.' This reflects effective use of learning in one subject to support learning in another, as well as good knowledge of three-dimensional shapes.
- Pupils have experiences that develop skills that will help them in the future. For example, they all have the opportunity to learn to swim, attend 'bikability' training, learn about banking and take part in transition courses before going on to secondary schools.
- Just occasionally, a few pupils do not achieve as well as they should because tasks are not planned well enough to meet their own abilities and interests or to extend their understanding and skills. At these times the level of challenge is not sufficient to promote the progress expected.
- Those known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve equally as well as other pupils, and sometimes better in English and mathematics, because the extra funding is used well to employ additional staffing to support the specific learning needs of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Very positive relationships and effective support across the school means that lessons are calm with a good work ethos. Routines are clear so that pupils know what is expected of them.
- Excellent strategies are in place to manage the behaviour of the few pupils who find learning difficult because they are relatively new to the school. Once pupils are settled, behaviour improves quickly because of the very positive way that teachers use the 'points' system to motivate and encourage learning.
- Teachers regularly extend pupils' skills through high quality demonstrations so that pupils know precisely what they need to do to learn successfully. For example, in a phonics (matching letters to the sounds they make) session for pupils in Years 3 to 6, the teacher and the teaching assistants used visual signs to show how using two vowels together can sometimes change the sound that they make. This strategy helped pupils to build their understanding and improve their reading skills.
- Outstanding teaching in a few classes enables pupils to make excellent progress in their learning and their behaviour. Very effective questioning and the use of an emotive video in a Year 6 lesson enabled pupils to develop very high levels of empathy and show respect for others.
- Strong teaching by the outreach team was clearly evident in a training session for pupils from seven other local schools who improved their self-esteem and confidence in talking aloud as they

shared their feelings about a poem they read with a local poet.

- The quality of assessments has improved since the last inspection and pupils' work is now accurately marked with helpful comments pointing out next steps. Teaching assistants are used well to promote pupils' learning, concentration and improvement.
- In a very few lessons teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging tasks that fully meet the varying needs and abilities of the pupils in the class. As a result, a few pupils do not always achieve as well as they might.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are referred to Littledown because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which have led them to the brink of exclusion from their mainstream schools. Case studies show that pupils' behaviour improves very quickly once pupils start because of the school's excellent approaches, and many pupils have turned their lives around during their time there.
- Pupils told the inspector that there is very little bullying or teasing and that any bullying is quickly dealt with. They say they feel very safe. Records show that behavioural and racist incidents have decreased rapidly over the past few years.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They really like the points system and identify that this helps them to try to manage their own behaviour positively. The success of the approach was evident during the inspection when pupils were observed reminding others about the possibility of losing points. They know that if they acquire enough points they will have a trip on Fridays to places such as the ice-skating rink or an adventure site.
- Pupils say that they like this school because 'people listen to them'. This is evident in their rapidly rising attendance, which is now above average in relation to other special schools.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely well promoted through the curriculum, enabling pupils to develop good levels of responsibility for themselves as well as respect for adults and other pupils. They value having a say in the life of the school through their membership of the school council and the eco council.
- Some excellent work-related opportunities for older pupils prepare them very well for the next stage of their education. These include an Enterprise Day where they get involved in construction and building, car mechanics or cooking with a local food chain. Pupils also work on the school allotment and leaders of the local Sikh and Muslim communities regularly visit the school and share their experiences, helping to extend pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and the governing body, has successfully built on the school's previous good performance to further improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement over the past three years.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the school and agree that their children achieve well.
- Good use of the national standards for teaching shows that leaders are committed to developing the skills of teachers so that they can improve, progress up the pay scale, and seek promotion. There are several good examples across all staff groups of how high quality training has improved opportunities and promotions.
- Rigorous training in the management of behaviour means that there is a consistent approach across the school with all staff using the same strategies. As a result, pupils know and understand what is acceptable and what is not, leading to their excellent behaviour and the calm, purposeful learning environment.
- The school is well supported by the local authority, which recognises the improvement the school is making to the lives of many different pupils. Local headteachers highly value the

school's work. This is because the school's leadership has a wide role across the authority involving improving behaviour and maintaining low levels of fixed term exclusions in comparison with many other local authorities.

- Middle managers are developing their leadership and management skills well, but a few are new to their roles and are not yet quite as effective in their monitoring and teaching support roles as others.
- The curriculum has been strengthened and now meets the needs of pupils well. Additional experiences such as the Friday trips, the residential opportunities for pupils in Year 6 and the new focus on the development of the eco council and 'Pupil Voice', all engage pupils well. These initiatives are motivating pupils to come to school every day. School leaders manage the successful outreach provision and the high quality training classes for pupils from mainstream schools very well, ensuring success for many other pupils in the borough.
- Leaders make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities, as shown by the good progress made by the high number of pupils who receive additional support funded by the pupil premium.
- Safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough and meet all requirements. Pupils agree that the school keeps them very safe and promotes their outstanding behaviour extremely well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is supportive and provides effective direction to the school. Members are fully involved in all aspects of leadership, including monitoring teaching, learning and behaviour. They manage the school's finances well and make sure that money allocated for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is focused on enhancing their achievement. The money spent on support staff both benefits these pupils' behaviour and ensures their progress is at least as good as their classmates. Governors make sure that good teachers and staff are rewarded through the school's management structure for staff performance. There are compelling examples of where staff have been rewarded financially for good or better performance and, in contrast, where underperformance has been eradicated through effective training and support.

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	110188
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	401105

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hazel Thorpe
Headteacher	Jo Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 May 2010
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