

# Lighthouse School Leeds

Bedford Field, Woodhouse Cliff, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS6 2LG

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Students make good progress from their individual starting points in both their personal development and in gaining academic skills.
- Teaching is skilfully matched to students' individual needs. Careful planning of learning helps students take the small steps needed to develop their communication and social skills.
- Students' behaviour is managed well. An in-depth analysis of the behaviour that inhibits students' learning enables staff to promote improvements, including through the use of frequent rewards.
- The Principal provides dynamic leadership, ensuring that the ambitious vision for the school, shared by governors, staff and parents, is becoming a reality.
- The Principal and the governing body draw effectively on professional support to make sure they have a realistic view of the quality and impact of the school's provision.
- Based on this, through considerable training and support for staff, leaders have established consistent approaches resulting in good teaching and achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The systems for tracking students' academic and personal progress operate separately, making it more difficult to gain a coherent overview of students' achievement.
- Activities aimed at monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision are not sharply enough focused on areas being developed or the impact of training.
- The leadership's capacity for educational development is restricted by the lack of a head of school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of nine lessons and a breakfast session as well as talking informally to students at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, governors, including the acting Chair of the Governing Body, staff, students and one of the school's improvement partners.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including those relating to safeguarding students, the school's self-evaluation, the development plan, assessment information and the system for managing teachers' performance.
- The views of parents were gathered from 15 questionnaires, a letter, a telephone conversation and a conversation in person.
- An analysis of responses in 23 staff questionnaires, along with discussions with staff during the inspection, gave an insight into the views of staff.

## Inspection team

Jane Austin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This free school serves the needs of students with autistic spectrum disorders and related communication difficulties. It opened in September 2012 with seven students and has plans to grow by about 10 students each year up to a total of 50 students. The 20 students currently on roll are in Years 7 to 11.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs. In addition to conditions linked to autism, some students have physical disabilities, including sensory impairments.
- Admissions to the school may be at any point during the year.
- There are approximately four times more boys than girls on roll.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for just over a quarter of the students. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support the learning of students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority or those who have a parent serving in the armed forces.
- About a quarter of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- Alternative provision is made at Meanwood Farm for one student for a day each week.
- The school employs a range of specialist staff including a speech and language therapist and a consultant in autistic spectrum conditions.
- Four school improvement partners work with the school, providing educational support and challenge to the Principal. The Principal is the school's strategic leader but is not an educationalist. There is currently a vacancy for a head of school to which the governing body is seeking to recruit.
- The school receives support from the headteacher of Treetops School in Thurrock, who is a National Leader of Education.
- The school is accommodated in a discrete section of the City of Leeds High School and is able to share the use of some specialist facilities such as those for food technology and physical education. Work, due for completion next year, has recently commenced on adapting a building on another site as the school's permanent home.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a cohesive approach to assessing students' achievement which draws together the assessment of students' academic progress and the evaluation of the steps they make towards meeting their personal targets, as set out in their statement of special educational needs.
- Ensure that systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are purposefully linked to the developments set out in the school's improvement plan and the training provided to staff to embed these.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Given their starting points and considerable difficulties with communication and social interaction, students make good progress. The school's assessment information shows that their progress accelerates once they have settled into school life.
- Students of all ages make better progress in mathematics than they do in developing their literacy skills.
- Students learn well because their individual targets are skilfully broken down into the very small stages needed for them to develop their learning, communication and social skills. Activities are carefully planned to match these stages. Daily, detailed assessments of students' learning are carefully logged and used well to plan subsequent lessons.
- Regular half-termly reviews of students' progress towards their personal development and academic targets are used effectively to identify both next steps and where more support is needed. However, assessment of academic progress is less well developed and the two assessment systems are not integrated. Although teachers' planning draws the information together well to plan learning, it is more difficult for leaders to gain an overview of students' achievement.
- Students' speech and language skills develop well because activities in dedicated sessions are sharply focused on their individual stages of development. Staff take every opportunity to help students practise these skills throughout the day.
- Last year, pupil premium funding was successfully used to increase staffing and resources for speech and language therapy. The school's data show that students supported by the pupil premium made marked improvements in their communication skills.
- Regular mentoring of students helps them understand their targets and provides opportunities for them to express any difficulties and anxieties they have about reaching these.
- Alternative provision and work experience are making a very positive contribution to the achievement of the students involved.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because it is closely matched to the personal and academic targets of each student.
- Teachers' detailed lesson planning ensures that students work incrementally towards their personal and academic targets. Tutors, who assist with learning, make a substantial, high-quality contribution to delivering each lesson to groups of students.
- Sessions are carefully timed to make the most of students' concentration spans. Rewards are used very effectively to mark each small success in the learning process and lead to short breaks in which students enjoy choosing their own activities.
- Staff make good use of a range of communication techniques that build well on the speech and language therapy. They model language clearly, encouraging students to recognise social cues and listen to others.
- Questioning is used very effectively to test learning and evaluate how securely students have grasped what is being taught. When appropriate, questioning is used well to prompt students to express their own views.
- Students record their work in a variety of appropriate ways, with good use being made of a range of technologies. However, there is not always enough encouragement for the more able students to record their work independently which can inhibit or slow the pace of their learning.
- Careful consideration is given to the groupings of students, which change during the day to meet particular learning targets and extend students' social interactions.

- Astute, regular observations of skills-teaching helps staff fine-tune the methods they use so that these promote learning as well as possible.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Given their difficulties with communication and social interactions, the behaviour of students is good. They respond well to the school's reward system.
- Learning takes place in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Students have positive attitudes to learning, moving between short periods of intensive teaching and their chosen activities without difficulty.
- The management of students' behaviour is very effective. Staff know students very well and are adept at recognising triggers that indicate increasing stress and anxiety. Clear, graduated plans are in place to guide responses to escalations in students' behaviour and, in the main, these work successfully.
- Staff are skilful at managing transitions, both during the day and to new activities, to minimise upset to students and maximise the time for learning. For instance, preparation for work experience was managed very well through a series of digital pictures of the location and the people the student would meet.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students and to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are followed.
- High levels of staffing mean that students are very well supervised. Staff are alert to the harm which students may cause themselves as a consequence of their special needs. Praise is used well to reinforce positive behaviours.
- Considerable emphasis is placed through various aspects of the curriculum on extending students' understanding of risk. For example, in a food technology lesson, great emphasis was placed on how to use kitchen equipment and deal safely with hot food.
- Attendance is in line with the average for mainstream secondary schools.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The Principal is a passionate exponent of the ambitious vision for the school that is now shared by staff, governors, parents and supporters. Very considerable commitment and hard work has gone into the successful establishment of the school. This is being built on as the school develops its own permanent, fit-for-purpose home.
- The Principal's role in giving strategic direction to the school is underpinned by a clear distribution of leadership roles across all the staff: everyone holds some whole-school responsibility.
- The Principal and governing body have a realistic view of the school's performance. In the period when there has been no head of school, they have organised the support and challenge of several school improvement partners and a National Leader in Education. This has helped them move the school forward at a time when capacity is stretched by this key vacancy.
- External monitoring of teaching and learning has contributed to the development of good provision and practice. There has been a considerable programme of training as the school has established ways of working and sought to implement these consistently. However, internal monitoring activities are not always focused sharply enough on areas being developed or on evaluating the impact of training.
- All the main whole-school systems are established, although at varying stages of development. Assessment systems are not fully integrated and performance management targets are not sharply focused since the majority of students joined the school this year.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well and makes a significant contribution to their spiritual,

moral, social and cultural development. In addition to national curriculum subjects, a considerable emphasis is placed on developing students' personal skills as well as ensuring that they develop some of the practical skills required for adult life.

- The curriculum is enriched through annual residential trips, which include some young people from the local autism community. An annual, whole-school visit to the local theatre also broadens students' experiences. Work experience for older students, including in the dining room of the host school, increases their range of contacts and their confidence. The small number of girls enjoy the weekly opportunities they have to work together, for instance on common interests such as using beauty products.
- Inspection questionnaires indicate that parents are very happy with the school's work. The school has an open-door policy. A range of methods of communicating with parents are used, including weekly newsletters for general information and students' planners for personal messages. Almost all parents are content with this.
- A governor has responsibility for liaising with parents informally, for instance through social and information events such as a recent session to keep parents abreast of e-safety issues.
- Leaders have been effective in fostering a range of partnerships and drawing on the expertise of the local authority, local schools and agencies.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a clear sense of the school's direction and has worked diligently with the Principal to ensure that the school has the policies and procedures in place to operate effectively. Regular reports from the Principal keep governors well informed about the school's performance, including the quality of teaching, and they make regular visits to see the school's work at first hand. The governing body regularly receives reports from the school's improvement partners, which also help to ensure that governors are alert to areas in need of development. Governors bring a wealth of relevant experience to their roles, particularly with regard to finance, buildings and human resources. Financial management, including checking on the impact of pupil premium funding, is on a tight rein. Governors with relevant expertise have contributed to the school's performance management procedures and are aware of how these will develop as the school becomes more established. Governors have recently conducted an audit of their skills and recognise that more educational expertise on the governing body would be advantageous.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138380
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	427156

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Special free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gary Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Katie Parlett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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