

Sandside Lodge School

Sandside Road, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 9EF

Inspection dates 18–19 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Almost all students demonstrate levels of attainment well below those of their peers in mainstream schools because of their special educational needs. Nevertheless, they gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a rate that is generally in line with national expectations. Their achievements are good.
- Almost all gain qualifications and examination passes in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form because of the literacy and numeracy skills they have previously developed in school.
- Teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection and is now good overall.
- Through the recent good work of staff, students' standard of reading has improved rapidly. Students also show great confidence when speaking and listening.
- The sixth form is good. Students are prepared well for moving on to the next stage in their lives.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding from the Reception Year to the sixth form. It is closely linked to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the school.
- The new headteacher and senior team have significantly improved the school since the last inspection, including students' achievement and the quality of teaching. There is evidence the school will rapidly improve further.
- Leaders are determined to provide the very best for students and ensure that they have good life chances.
- The governing body is supportive of the new headteacher and is becoming increasingly effective in providing appropriate challenge and support to the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers use only a very restricted variety of teaching and learning methods and students then lose interest.
- Sometimes, the activities planned by teachers are not matched closely enough to students' interests and abilities and this restricts their learning.
- Students cannot always make the best use of the written materials that teachers provide to them.
- The governing body cannot show that the pupil premium funding is always used specifically to benefit the students for whom it is intended.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed nine lessons given by eight teachers and teaching assistants. Some shorter visits to classrooms were also made. Inspectors spent over four hours in lessons.
- The inspectors observed students arriving at school, having their lunch and enjoying break times.
- Students' work in class was examined. The inspectors spoke with students formally and informally to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other managers, teachers and the Chair of the Governing Body. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors noted the views of staff through discussions about the school with them, although no staff questionnaires were returned.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took note of the school's own parental questionnaires undertaken recently.
- The school's work was observed, and important documents concerning leaders and managers' understanding of how well the school works, together with the planning, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and students' achievement records were looked at, including those in the sixth form.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All students have a statement of special educational needs. Sandside Lodge admits those having severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Around a quarter of students have additional learning difficulties associated with autism or communication.
- Currently, there are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and they are placed in the first of the primary classes.
- Around a quarter of the students are girls. The proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is close to the national average for all schools. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The very large majority of students come from a White British background reflecting that of the local district of South Lakeland.
- A small number of students undertake some aspects of their education at other local secondary schools so they can utilise specialist resources. There is no alternative provision.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2011. Other changes in staffing have also taken place, including in the senior team. A major review of posts held by teaching assistants is currently under way.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that teaching is consistently good or better to enable students to make at least good progress in every lesson by:
 - encouraging teachers to use those teaching and learning methods that maintain students' interest
 - directing teachers to plan activities in lessons that are closely matched to the needs and levels of ability of each individual student
 - ensuring that teachers always provide writing and written materials that students, where possible, can read or access easily.
- The governing body should ensure that the pupil premium funding is clearly allocated to the students for whom it is intended.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of students achieve well. Information kept by the school and observations of lessons confirm that those with different forms of special educational needs make equally good progress. A greater majority of students make good progress than in similar schools. There are indications that some students' progress is outstanding in English and mathematics and throughout some other areas of the curriculum.
- The progress made in English by students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly slower than that of all other groups. However, the increasingly useful information held by the school indicates that this group is catching up quickly, both in the progress they make and the attainment reached.
- All students are fully included in learning and have the same opportunities to succeed. There are no indications that any students are discriminated against by unsuitable study programmes. However, the rate of learning is slower in some lessons because teaching is less effective than it should be.
- Staff training has been effective in encouraging students' reading development. Those known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding have increased their literacy and communication skills since the last inspection. Consequently, they access all areas of learning more successfully. However, this funding has been used to purchase additional resources in such a way that it is impossible to show how it specifically benefits those for whom it is intended.
- For many, speaking and listening skills are better than expected. This was shown when students explained with great skill the meaning of some technical language used. In a religious education lesson, one student used his own notes to explain confidently what is meant by 'Pentecost'.
- Almost all students gain qualifications and accreditations in the upper school, including in the sixth form, and the quality and quantity of examination passes are rising as students' literacy skills improve. For example, students now gain passes at the Silver Level of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Students move on to the next stages of their lives and/or education well prepared by the school. Last year, almost all went on to further education and training or employment, and this is remarkable given their learning difficulties and disabilities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Effective performance management and other methods have driven up the quality of teaching since the headteacher's appointment. Teaching is good overall.
- A significant amount of teaching is outstanding and some good lessons have outstanding features. In other lessons, however, teaching requires improvement because the rate of progress made by students is too slow and some activities become tedious.
- Similarly, in some otherwise high-quality lessons, there are some aspects of teaching that could be improved even more, such as the way in which teachers expose students to writing. When this has been given little thought, students' literacy skills are not improved and those who are weaker readers become confused.
- The recent good work of the staff has had a significant impact on students' reading skills and the subsequent confidence that they have gained in speaking and listening. The training that teachers and teaching assistants have received in teaching reading through using the sounds that letters make (phonics) has been productive. The next step, however, must be for teachers to improve the quality of the written materials that they provide.
- In the best lessons, teachers take great care to plan for the individual needs of students so they know exactly what is expected of them and how they can succeed. Students are challenged very effectively on a personal basis. In such cases, teachers have a clear understanding of exactly what progress students make during the lesson. They are able to record students' successes

very quickly and easily into the school's information system.

- However, teachers sometimes plan lessons in ways that identify the successes of groups of students rather than of individuals. In these lessons, students could make more progress if teachers planned for each individual to succeed through personal challenges.
- Students benefit greatly in this school from the high-quality relationships that exist between themselves and staff who work successfully during lessons to support and help them achieve their tasks. Staff provide very high-quality physical and emotional care for students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' learning difficulties and disabilities place great demands on staff, who work very effectively to keep them gainfully occupied so that excellent behaviour is maintained. Around the school, students are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Rates of attendance are high for a special school. Almost all attend whenever they can. Absence is usually associated with illness or students' learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Students' outstanding behaviour and willingness to come to school stem from the excellent relationships they enjoy with one another and staff. Students trust the adults and they become confident in trying new experiences. This was observed in a science lesson when students, who might otherwise have been reluctant to do so, studied live worms by holding them on their hands.
- Students get to know very clearly about right and wrong. They understand the moral codes at the school and obey the rules. Bullying is almost unknown because of the respect students have for one another.
- Students get to know how other people live and work through the extensive range of trips, visits, holidays and extra-curricular activities. Through the curriculum, students learn about other people, their cultures and religions.
- Students get on very well together and despite their learning difficulties and disabilities, they socialise very well in all areas of the school. In classrooms, inspectors were struck by how kind the students are to one another and how helpful they can be without being prompted.
- At the same time, the adults do not try to do too much for students. Staff are skilled in allowing students plenty of time to work out their ideas, such as how to move from one place to another or complete a task.
- By the time they leave school, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop the self-esteem and self-confidence to gain qualifications and move on successfully to the next stages in their lives.

The leadership and management are good

- As a result of good leadership and management, the school is much improved since the last inspection. There are indications of emerging outstanding practice and a determination by managers to ensure the school improves even further.
- The headteacher has clearly established how the school can improve. Inefficient ways of working have been eliminated and teaching and learning are now of much better quality.
- The quality of teaching has improved as a result of effective performance management. Lessons are now mainly good or better, with students making good progress.
- The information gained about the school's work is used productively by leaders and managers to identify strengths and weaknesses accurately. They plan very effectively to ensure that further improvements occur, according to the priorities they set.
- Some staff were previously reluctant to change their ways of working, but through good leadership, the new headteacher has persuaded most to adopt more efficient practices. A number of staff went out of their way to meet with inspectors to praise the leadership of the headteacher and to say how much things have changed for the better since her appointment.

- The school's own questionnaires indicate that relationships with students' families are improving rapidly.
- The courses planned by the school are good. They ensure that all are included in learning and none are left out or discriminated against. Work experience and forest education are regularly timetabled. Even those with the most profound difficulties are included in residential trips and visits; students from all areas of the school enjoy the off-site education that encourages them to meet people from different backgrounds and practise their social skills.
- The local authority has been extremely supportive to the school throughout a difficult time and has provided effective advisory services.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has undergone a full review and become much more effective through, for example, the adoption by members of class groups. It demonstrates its support through the regular meetings between the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher, and has successfully stabilised school finances. Members regularly scrutinise the school's information about the progress that students make. They hold the headteacher to account for the management of staff by ensuring that the targets set for staff, resulting from performance management procedures, are appropriate. Governors also undertake a full review of the headteacher's performance each year. The governing body ensures that all requirements for safeguarding are met, but it is not yet able to show how the pupil premium funding is allocated to benefit those for whom it is intended.

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	112466
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	405393

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Sanderson
Headteacher	Susan Gill
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
Telephone number	01229 588825
Fax number	01229 588825
Email address	sgill@sandsidelodge.cumbria.sch.uk

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