

Talbot Specialist School

Lees Hall Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S8 9JP

Inspection dates	12–13 March 2013		
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection: This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The enthusiasm, knowledge and forward-thinking ideas of the headteacher, senior leaders, and of the governing body have seen the school go from strength to strength since the previous inspection.
- Their unstinting drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning, coupled with high-quality professional training has raised the bar. Outstanding teaching and an imaginative curriculum enable outstanding achievements for all students regardless of need or background.
- Though in small steps, progress is remarkable because teachers use their detailed knowledge of individual students to plan work that is carefully matched to their capability, age and interests.
- Students are extremely well behaved. They take a pride in all they do. They show through their beaming faces how much they enjoy their work, and say they feel very safe among other students and adults.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The well-thought-out programme equips students exceptionally well with the skills they need for life after school.
- The provision for the creative and performing arts is exceptional. Students speak with great delight of their performances on the London stage at a Shakespeare festival, and of performing in a floating ballet in the hydrotherapy pool to the music of Swan Lake.
- As a specialist school, leaders and staff share their wealth of knowledge of disability and special educational needs through conferences and training, across the city and the county.
- Considerable support is offered to families. Exemplary links with medical and other professionals, and with universities, contribute significantly to students' learning and well-being.
- First-rate contacts with the local Asian community contribute to students' progress, such as teaching sign language to staff at a Mosque school to enable students to further their understanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors looked at the work in students' books.
- Discussions were held with students, representatives of the governing body, staff, including senior and middle managers, and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account the parents' responses to the school's own survey and 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school's own data on students' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents concerning safeguarding.

Inspection team

Katharine Halifax, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Helm	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school caters for students with profound and multiple, or severe learning difficulties. Many of the students have physical and medical needs. In addition, one in 10 students has autism and this proportion is increasing.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is co-located with Newfield secondary school. Nine students are on the roll of both Talbot and Newfield Schools.
- A further four students are on the roll of both Talbot and Seven Hills special school.
- Almost one third of the students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is above average. Pupil premium funding is intended for the support of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority, or from families in the armed forces.
- Two thirds of students are of White British heritage. Of the remainder, the majority are of Pakistani heritage, with a few students of African or Caribbean descent, or of mixed race.
- A team of nurses and therapists is based at the school.
- As a specialist school for cognition and learning, the school works closely with the 10 other special schools within the authority, and with the 27 families of mainstream schools.
- The school has recently been awarded Teaching School status for leadership and innovation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure students' daily reading records are clear about how each student can improve their reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students make notable progress in lessons and over time. There are no significant differences in the achievement of students by gender, ethnic group, or by category of special educational needs. The pupil premium funding has been used wisely, for example for additional support staff, and in extending the range of national awards. As a result, the achievement of students known to be eligible for the funding is marginally above that of those who do not qualify. They make excellent progress in numeracy, literacy, communication, and in their personal development.
- Students make extraordinary progress in all areas of learning, for example, many make three years progress in two years. Parents and students are very pleased with the progress they make. Many of the students do not speak, but are skilled in making themselves understood by, for example, pointing with their eyes, exchanging pictures or signing.
- While many have very limited abilities, almost one third of students read. Though for some this is at a basic level, their enjoyment is evident as they use the illustrations to tell a story. Others choose books and make sense of the text through looking at the illustrations and recognising simple words. The most-able students read for pleasure and use a range of strategies to help them recognise new words. Furthermore, they are able to answer questions about what they have read.
- By the end of the sixth form, students have accumulated a good number of units in, for example, horticulture, sport and leisure, and in engaging with the world around. At the age of 19, many go on to further education with the most-able embarking on City and Guild Practical skills courses.
- A number of students have degenerative and life-threatening conditions. Work with medical and other professionals combined with a sensitive programme enables these students to maintain their skills and contributes appreciably to their well-being.
- Students who are on the register of two schools benefit tremendously from skills offered at Talbot and from the shared site. For example, Talbot students have embarked on a course leading to GCSE in art, and higher-attaining students benefit considerably from joining in English lessons in the secondary school.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Students learn at an outstanding rate because lesson planning takes account of individual targets in students' personal learning plans. Activities are designed to challenge students and to make them think and reason.
- Adults know their students exceptionally well and do all they can to remove obstacles to learning. Teamwork is first-rate ensuring, for example, that students are comfortable and receptive to learning whether they are lying on a bed, in a standing frame or in a wheelchair.
- Adults expect students to be as independent as possible and know exactly when to stand back and when to offer verbal or physical prompts. They are fully conversant with each student's preferred method of communication using signs, symbols, electronic gadgets and the human voice to include all students in all activities.
- Teachers make learning fun and provide activities that appeal to all the senses. For example, in literacy, students with the most profound needs had a greater understanding of the setting for the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe through experiencing cold while watching a snow scene and smelling wood smoke.
- Teachers make learning meaningful and link subjects. For example, in a music lesson, students increased their vocabulary and literacy, recognising words such as 'composer' and 'conductor', then extending their understanding of number through counting beats.

- Teachers are accurate in their assessment of students' progress and achievements and use the information effectively to plan the next stage of learning. Records are in place for all subjects. However, the quality of reading records needs improvement. In most cases, comments such as 'read well' are made, but with little reference to difficulties encountered or how these can be overcome.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is almost always exemplary in lessons and around the school. Students say they are not frightened of anything or anyone and that there is no evidence of bullying. Students from different ethnic backgrounds get along together particularly well. Parents and staff expressed no concerns about students' behaviour or safety.
- Students with complex behavioural needs quickly learn what is expected of them because adults follow meticulously agreed plans. Carefully thought-out routines enable students with autism to feel less confused and enjoy their learning. This is especially evident in the diminishing anxiety of students with profound autism returning to the local authority having been in residential schools.
- Students are eager to share their knowledge in lessons and with adults. They are happy to tackle new experiences, and respond especially well to the opportunities to be as independent as their need allows. Students care for each other and willingly celebrate each other's achievements.
- Within their capabilities, students have a very good understanding of keeping safe, particularly near water and when using computers.
- Students say they 'love' being on the same site as Newfield. All enjoy taking lunch in the main dining hall. The most-able students seek out their mainstream friends and pass a sociable lunchtime together.
- A careful check is kept on attendance. Students attend whenever they are well enough. Where students are too ill, and during long-term absence, work is provided to do in the home or hospital. Families appreciate the continued support from the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are exemplary. Leaders are innovative and relentless in providing the best they can for students and their families. Each student has a 'personalised learning plan' which ensures all have equality of opportunity regardless of disability or special educational needs.
- Teaching continues to improve because of the first-rate support and training staff receive. Initiatives such as the 'buddy system' allow teachers and support assistants to learn from each other through sharing ideas, and observing outstanding practice.
- The check on information about students' progress is undertaken frequently and in great detail. As a result, any dips in students' learning are quickly identified and remedied. This means no student, or group of students fall behind. The school is taking the lead in the local authority running courses to help other schools make better use of data.
- Scrupulous checks are made on the performance of teachers and support assistants and the information used effectively when deciding whether teachers should receive a pay rise. Maximum use is made of the skills of members of staff, with many progressing to senior posts within the school.
- Leaders provide a comprehensive programme of training for other schools. This is based on a careful analysis of each school's needs. Topics cover, for example, autism, understanding behaviour, and sexuality. As a consequence of the training, the provision for pupils and disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved across the local authority. The

local authority holds the school in high esteem.

- The curriculum has been revamped since the previous inspection and is now available to staff and parents electronically. In addition to all the required subjects, it provides students with numerous memorable experiences. Staff grasp every opportunity to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, seizing the moment when a student commented on the transparency of a dragonfly's wings when studying mini-beasts.
- Work experience and college courses prepare students well for the move to further education. A 'transition day' towards the end of summer holidays for each new Year 7 group has been especially successful in enabling them to settle quickly at the start of the new school year.
- Keeping students safe and healthy is of the highest priority. Staff training is thorough and includes matters that particularly affect disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Excellent procedures are in place to protect and maintain the safety of all students, including those whose circumstances mean they have the potential to be vulnerable.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governance of the school is outstanding. Members of the governing body use their collective knowledge and experience exceedingly well. This is particularly so for students' achievements and how the money from the pupil premium is contributing to achievement. Regular 'enquiry walks' give members of the governing body a greater understanding of what is happening in classrooms and of any improvements needed. They report they are able to have frank and open discussions, making sure the headteacher is accountable. Members of the governing body attend training. Consequently, their assessment of the school's strengths is accurate.

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	107178
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	403782

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Tiddy
Headteacher	Judith Smith
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
Telephone number	0114 250 7394
Fax number	0114 250 7857
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