

Langley School

Trinity Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 6TJ

Inspection dates

20–21 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that teaching and pupils' achievements have gone from strength to strength since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress from their very varied starting points. A very high proportion exceed the progress they are expected to make in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is expert in providing for pupils' special educational needs. Pupils make outstanding progress in their communication skills and in their personal development because all staff are very skilled at promoting these. Signs symbols are used very well to promote these.
- Pupils who arrive later at the school are very quickly settled and make very rapid progress. Pupils say this is because they feel safe and valued, and the school helps them to believe in themselves.
- Parents are very pleased with their children's progress and with the ways in which the school helps them to help their child.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are excellent at managing pupils' behaviour positively so that even those who have challenges linked to their special educational needs take increased responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils display great care and concern for each other because staff model this so well for them and have very high expectations of them.
- Leaders and teachers make highly effective use of the information that the school holds about individual pupils' strengths and next steps. This has underpinned the good improvement since the last inspection.
- The school has drawn very well on its federation partner school's skills and on the Learning Trust to strengthen teaching and assessment further and to challenge itself to do even better.
- An outstanding curriculum ensures that skills pupils learn in English or mathematics lessons are practised in their topic work. Similarly, therapy targets are very well integrated into pupils' everyday classroom experiences.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 12 lessons jointly with the executive headteacher or the head of school. They saw all teachers teaching. They also observed assemblies and pupils' behaviour at playtime and as they moved about the school.
- Meetings were held with pupils, with members of the governing body, members of staff and by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be analysed. However, inspectors were able to talk with a small number of parents as they visited the school. They also took account of 20 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a wide range of the school's documentation. These included the school's self-evaluation and development planning, the ways in which it tracks and judges the progress of pupils' progress of pupils and policies and records relating the ways in which the school keeps its pupils safe.
- Inspectors talked with a group of pupils about their views of the school, as well as looking at pupils' workbooks.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jeff Plumb

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Langley is a school that caters for pupils who have a wide range of disabilities and needs. Since its last inspection it has been designated by the local authority as a school for pupils with cognition and learning difficulties.
- The main groups of pupils are those with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. However, many have multiple needs such as speech language and communication difficulties, sensory, physical and medical needs and/or behavioural, emotional and social needs.
- Pupils attend from across north and mid Birmingham and some are from neighbouring local authorities. All pupils have a statement of special educational need and there are more than twice as many boys as girls.
- Almost half of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, the additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for other groups. Just over half of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remainder are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the highest proportion being from Pakistani and other Asian heritages. Just under a quarter speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils enter the school at any point in their primary education, sometimes as late as Year 6.
- The school shares a building with a mainstream school, Coppice School. In September 2012 it became federated with Beaufort school, another special school for primary aged pupils. The two schools share an executive headteacher and a governing body. In May 2013 it also became part of a co-operative trust, the Four Oaks Learning Trust for Excellence, with Coppice School and other local primary and secondary schools, two universities and a rotary club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the range of ways in which pupils' work is marked so that pupils can understand more of this for themselves by:
 - using symbols and other visual devices to support marking where appropriate
 - ensuring that the language used is more 'child friendly' and takes account of each pupil's communicative and literacy level and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All children enter the school with skills which are well below those typical for others of their age. They make outstanding progress during their time at Langley, both in the subjects they study and in the areas such as communication and language and personal, social and emotional development in which they have very specific needs.
- Children who attend the Nursery and Reception make excellent progress in their communication, personal and social development and in their physical development, because all staff are expert at encouraging them towards the next small step of learning. They make particular strides in their sociability and their interest in what others have to say and in their curiosity about the world. Pupils in Year 1 also benefit from the extended early years and play activities available in the Foundation class, so that their earlier progress is built on highly effectively and accelerated.
- Music and rhyme is used to great effect to gain pupils' attention and to help them to attend and listen throughout the school. Well-rehearsed routines and the use of signs and symbols all help pupils to understand what is expected of them and to make small but very important steps in their understanding in English and mathematics and their topic work.
- Pupils make such good progress because of the excellent systems in place to check on pupils' levels and needs. Teachers use these very effectively to set very challenging targets for every pupil and the learning is carefully planned around these. Pupils' progress towards these is checked on meticulously. The school's own assessment data shows that all groups of pupils, whatever their starting point or age on entering the school, make outstanding progress. They often far exceed the expected rates of progress.
- Pupils say they listen and learn so well because their teachers make the work interesting and they explain so well what they have to do. A few pupils achieve closer to those of others of their age particularly in mathematics and reading. Where this is the case they benefit from inclusion opportunities within Coppice School as well as the school's own carefully tailored provision.
- Close working with Beaufort school has also helped the school improve achievement since the last inspection. Those pupils with severe learning difficulties and the most complex levels of need also make outstanding progress. This is because teachers, parents and therapists work so well together and identify the very small but significant next steps for these pupils very well indeed.
- There are no differences between the achievements and progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, those for whom English is an additional language and others in the school. This is because staff have high expectations of every individual pupil and programmes for each are so well tailored to their needs. If the progress of any pupil slows is immediately picked up and additional support provided, such as through intensive support within the Hedgehogs class where necessary.
- Early literacy and language skills and mathematical development are developed very well both within designated lessons and across the curriculum. By the time they leave all pupils have made extremely good progress and share books, count and use information technology with enthusiasm. A few read fluently and others are confident to use their skills in practical situations, reading a poem or a prayer, for example, in assembly. All this and their excitement about their learning means that pupils are very well set up for their transition to secondary school.

- Pupils' physical skills are developed well through their physical education sessions, their outdoor play and their Forest School activities. The sports premium is providing funding to extend these further, including opportunities to play sports with other schools and to extend the sensory circuits activities which strengthen individual pupils' readiness to learn.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because teachers have very high expectations, are skilled at meeting both the academic and personal needs of pupils, and rigorous in finding ways around any barriers to learning that pupils may have. Teachers use signs and symbols expertly to ensure that each pupil, including those with autistic spectrum disorders and those with severe learning difficulties, can understand and take part in all the learning in the classroom at their own level.
- Outstanding teaching has ensured that there are no differences in the achievements of different groups and cultures, of boys and girls and of those in receipt of the pupil premium. This is because teachers use the information the school holds about pupils' levels, interests and needs so well to plan their lessons and to find interesting things to do with them. The most-able pupils achieve very well because the school stretches and challenges them, including using inclusion opportunities at Coppice School.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at engaging pupils' attention and extending it so that they remain on task for increasingly longer periods, even when their specific needs might make this difficult for them. They know their pupils exceptionally well. Some pupils have had negative experiences before entering Langley. These pupils quickly make very strong and trusting relationships with their teachers so that they are strongly motivated to try their best.
- Lessons have a good balance of practical activities and time for talking and writing. In an excellent lesson exploring 'Puss in Boots', pupils offered their ideas freely showing a very good understanding of both the story and characters. As in many other lessons observed, not a moment for learning was lost because teaching assistants were very well deployed and pupils were so motivated to share what they knew.
- In almost all lessons there is excellent attention paid to helping pupils take responsibility for their own learning and judging for themselves how well they are doing. Excellent use of praise keeps pupils trying and makes clear to pupils what is good about their behaviour and learning. This spurs pupils on and indeed leads to them praising each other too.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and is not always made accessible to the pupils because the language used is too complex or it is not written in simpler script or using symbols to support. Pupils know therefore that their teacher liked their work but not always why and what next steps might be.
- Children in Early Years Foundation Stage also benefit from outstanding teaching. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at engaging their interest and attention and build on the smallest communications and behaviours to stretch and challenge each even more. There is a great sense of joy as each individual achieves their target, whether joining in a song or completing a number task.
- Parents are thrilled with the progress their child makes and with the relationships that they form with staff at the school. Homework shared through the home/school book is very well tailored to each pupil's needs and helps parents also to contribute to and celebrate their child's learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Those who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties linked to their special educational needs make considerable strides in learning to manage these because the school is so focused on this and improves their ability to communicate through other means so well.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour makes a very strong contribution to their learning in class. Pupils, who before they attended the school are reported as having very limited attention spans and cooperation, concentrate for increasingly longer periods of time.
- The youngest children display increasing interest in others, responding very well to their teacher's praise and encouragement. Older pupils are pleased to take part on events with pupils from other schools and talk with pride about their achievements. They are polite and courteous. They are quick to celebrate each other's achievements and encourage each other, saying for example, 'Go on you can do it,' when a friend is trying to work out the name of a particular shape.
- Pupils are clear that there is no bullying and that if incidents do occur they are 'accidental' and staff quickly sort them out. They say everyone is kind and that is why they like the school so much. A few indicate they were not so happy at their previous school but are now. They know that this helps them to learn and that they are proud of their learning.
- Pupils move very safely around the school. They know about 'stranger danger' and that they must be careful on the internet. They show great respect for each other during the class assembly, celebrating each other's work. They have many opportunities for quiet reflection, for learning about each other's differences and about different cultures and to support each other. All this, their visits and links with other schools and the community, and their Forest School work aids their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The highly effective executive headteacher and an outstanding leadership team and governing body have led this school through much change since the last inspection. They have ensured that this has all worked to the benefit of pupils at the school. Despite several changes in staff and some long-term absence, teaching and achievement has improved from good to outstanding. This is because of the excellent ways in which staff performance is managed and pupil progress is monitored and linked to this.
- The use of assessment by teachers and particularly the ways in which small steps of achievement are recognised and targeted has improved considerably. Teachers' planning and pupil work is very well informed by these.
- Training and partnership work within the federation and the Learning Trust have strengthened teaching and ensured that new staff are very quickly skilled up to provide effectively for the learning of the range of pupils they teach. Staff are very well deployed so that all available support is used to promote and accelerate learning.
- The roles of subject leaders and other managers have been strengthened through shared links with other schools and the setting up of teaching and learning teams in their subjects that are highly focused on pupil progress and how teaching might meet their needs even better.

- All this contributes to a culture of high expectations and ambition for every pupil and a concern, as parents acknowledge, for every aspect of their child's development. Improvements in the tailoring of programmes for individuals and in the ways in which topics support literacy and numeracy have resulted in pupils being able to use their emerging skills effectively.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly relevant, building pupils' skills systematically and ensuring that their progress, interest, confidence and motivation set them up very well for their next steps in education. An excellent range of theme days, assemblies and of work with the community and other schools promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well indeed.
- The new primary sports funding is being used to enhance the school's provision and pupils' skills, including staff training, additional clubs, outings and specialist support such as sensory circuits. Pupils have many opportunities to try out different sports and to excel, such as with a local football club and in the hydrotherapy pool of its partner school.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors are hugely positive about its work and the 'extra mile' that staff go for their children. They are pleased that the school is extending its keyworker system and praise the ways that the learning mentor and other staff help them with problems so they can move forward with their child.
- The local authority values the school hugely but considers it 'light touch' because of its assessment of its strengths including its last Ofsted report.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is highly effective, playing both an advocate role for the school with the local authority and challenging the school's leadership extremely well. They bring a wide range of skills and experience that benefits the school considerably. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that could be improved even more. They have provided very strong leadership as the school moved to federation status and joined the charitable trust and know the benefits these bring to the school and its outcomes. They are very clear as to the quality of teaching and how it relates to outcomes. They overview the school's performance management systems very well, checking on how these relate to outcomes. This ensures that when staff pay and promotion is reviewed these are linked to their performance. Governors have a detailed knowledge of how the pupil premium is spent and how this is improving pupil outcomes and check on this carefully. They know they must check on outcomes too in relation to the sports funding plans and monitor how this is being spent.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	103630
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	429634

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Thomas
Headteacher	Fiona Woolford
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2011
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