

The Coppice School

Ash Grove, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6GY

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good leadership by senior and middle leaders and managers has ensured the school continues to provide good teaching and outstanding care to sustain pupils' good achievement across the school.
- Children get off to an outstanding start in the early years as a result of the excellent planning to meet their individual needs and the teaching of very skilled staff.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in developing their communication skills because staff ensure this is a focus of learning in all lessons.
- Individual pupils are assessed thoroughly and make good progress towards their targets in reading, writing and mathematics from their very low starting points.
- The quality of teaching is good. The curriculum has been recently revised and teachers plan lessons which capture the imagination of pupils and help them to learn.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress in their independence and life skills and are as well prepared as possible for their future lives.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding.
- Partnerships with parents are exceptionally strong. The school has very successfully found innovative ways of ensuring parents have regular opportunities to meet with teachers and key workers to discuss the education and care of their children. Staff are always willing to help parents with concerns they have about their children at home.
- Members of the governing body have improved their understanding of their role and responsibilities since the previous inspection and provide senior leaders with good support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils with autism spectrum conditions do not always achieve as well as they could. Not all staff are yet highly skilled in supporting the learning and behavioural needs of these pupils.
- The achievement of the few most able pupils is sometimes held back because they are not always moved on to harder work quickly enough.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching by leaders and managers is not yet fully effective. They do not undertake first-hand observations of lessons regularly enough to gain a clear picture of the impact of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons. Three of these were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons and around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body. Discussions were held with school nurses and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school. They looked at a range of documents including those relating to the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning, the school’s new curriculum plans, the school’s own information about pupils’ progress, teachers’ planning and assessment files, safeguarding including risk assessments, and behaviour management.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), one letter from a parent and the school’s own questionnaire analysis. They also took into account the responses from the 15 staff questionnaires returned.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Coppice School caters for pupils and students who have severe and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties. An increasing proportion of pupils have autism spectrum conditions, complex medical conditions and physical disabilities.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a very small number of pupils who come from homes where English is as an additional language.
- About two-thirds of pupils are boys.
- Off-site education for some of the sixth form students is provided at Runshaw College and Brothers of Charity.
- Classes are mainly based on the ages and key stages of pupils. Children in the early years are taught in a class alongside pupils from Years 1 and 2 pupils from time to time depending on learning needs. There is one Key Stage 3 and 4 class specifically for pupils with autism spectrum conditions but there are also pupils and students with autism in other classes across the school.
- The school provides some training in communication and behaviour management to partner schools in the area.
- The school holds Leading Parent Partnership Award and Investors in People, both recently renewed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management's monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching further by:
 - carrying out more frequent checks on teaching and learning in lessons
 - evaluating the effectiveness of the programme of teacher-to-teacher support to ensure it is making the expected improvements in the quality of teaching
 - ensuring members of the governing body have an even better first-hand knowledge of the work of the school by arranging links with specific aspects of the school's work.
- Raise the achievement of pupils even further by:
 - further developing staff skills and knowledge in working with pupils with autism spectrum conditions
 - making sure that that the most able pupils are moved on to harder work more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a clear and honest view of how well the school is doing and what is needed to improve even further. There is an appropriate delegation of responsibilities to middle leaders who monitor their areas very well to ensure the school maintains and builds on its successes and who take action quickly on areas requiring improvement.
- Leaders have introduced a programme of teacher-to-teacher support to raise the quality of teaching. However, this has not been monitored effectively enough by senior leaders and has taken some time to get into place. Although senior leaders undertake frequent checks on teachers' planning and pupils' work, they do not currently have a sufficiently clear picture of the impact of teaching through first-hand observations of lessons. However, the commitment the school has to supporting and professionally developing staff is recognised in the re-awarding of Investors in People.
- The curriculum has been recently reviewed and is now very well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. There is an appropriate focus on developing students' personal and social skills, as well as their functional understanding and use of reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is well designed to ensure the most able sixth form students develop their independence and to prepare them for the world of work. Students attending off-site education are always accompanied by school staff to make sure their needs are met appropriately. The curriculum for less able students in the sixth form is under review to ensure they are provided with move-on learning that will help them to prepare for their future lives.
- The curriculum is also enriched by frequent trips out which are very well risk-assessed. These trips provide pupils with opportunities to practise skills learned in the classroom such as shopping, walking and using cafes. Theme days and weeks, such as stone-age history week and science week and the celebration of occasions such as Children in Need, strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, pupils of all abilities held the two minutes silence on Remembrance Day and it was clear that many of them understood the reason for reflection and the effect on their lives in modern Britain.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional support and specific interventions for eligible pupils. The school uses some of the funding to buy into the 'Achievement for All' programme which is specifically designed to ensure gaps are closed between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Primary sports funding is used very effectively to provide new experiences for pupils. It has made a significant impact on increasing the participation of all groups of pupils in sport. It provides a specialist sports coordinator on one day a week, access to facilities in the community and additional equipment and resources to meet the particular needs of the pupils in this school.
- The deputy headteacher works closely with class teachers to effectively monitor pupils' progress and identify any pupil, or groups of pupils, who may be underperforming. Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to close gaps. New models of assessment have been found to better demonstrate the very small steps of progress made by the majority of the pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A new educational model is in the process of being introduced for pupils with autism spectrum conditions. As a result of the close checks on the progress of individuals, the school ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Staff accompany students attending the alternative provisions and effectively monitor their progress and behaviour by first-hand observations.
- Partnerships with parents are outstanding. 'Keeping in Touch' meetings and phone calls are held between class teachers and parents on a regular basis. Senior and middle leaders check on the feedback parents give to the school's own questionnaires. Responses are always highly positive and areas of concern are acted upon. The school continues to hold the Leading Parent Partnership Award.
- The local authority provides light-touch support. The school has good links with other special and mainstream schools in the area to offer training in communication and management strategies and to share assessments of pupils' work to check judgements are accurate.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide a good level of support to the school's leaders and managers. Governors are very aware of their responsibilities in ensuring pupils are safe and well cared for and make sure that the school meets its statutory safeguarding duties. They ask questions about the pupils' progress data and about the performance management of staff ensuring their annual targets are appropriately linked to school improvement planning and Teachers' Standards. Governors have not been required to make decisions regarding pay increase as almost all staff are at the top of their pay scales but are aware of their responsibilities regarding some newly appointed staff.

- Members of the governing body have agreed how the pupil premium and primary sports funding are spent but are not clear enough about the impact these funds have had on the development of eligible pupils. Governors have plans in place to further develop their skills, to recruit new members with diverse skills and expertise and to become better-informed about the work of the school at first hand by each governor having a specific link into school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils clearly enjoy school. They show respect for each other, for staff and visitors. Staff provide children with good models of behaviour from the time they start in early years so that they quickly learn the good behaviour seen throughout the school and into the sixth form. Although some pupils can present with difficult behaviour associated with their learning difficulties and disabilities on occasions, this is well-managed and does not disturb the learning of others. The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to their learning but occasionally strategies to support pupils with autism are not effective enough and it can be difficult to engage them in their learning. At these times, their progress slows.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They like to help staff by doing jobs such as collecting printing from the photocopier or taking messages to the office. They look after their classrooms and play areas.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly to ensure pupils are safe and secure at all times, particularly on trips out of school and to the alternative provision. As a result of the thorough risk assessments, even the most vulnerable pupils have been able to thoroughly enjoy residential trips.
- Pupils often find it difficult to understand the issues relating to different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying. They rarely have the necessary judgement to make decisions independently but the school's staff are always seeking different ways to help them understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The very strong relationships pupils enjoy with staff mean that anxieties are quickly recognised and explored to discover any underlying problems which pupils may not be able to express very easily. As a result, pupils feel safe, confident and well cared for while they are in school.
- Parents also say they know their children are safe in school and are very happy to attend. Absences are almost always due to medical conditions.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers' assessment files, records of pupils' achievements in files and on video, plus examples of their work, all demonstrate that teaching over time is good.
- Teachers know pupils and their individual needs, abilities and learning styles very well. They plan lessons with clear objectives based on what the pupils already know and can do to support them to make very small steps of progress. Occasionally, planning of whole-class sessions does not meet the very different needs of the pupils in a group effectively enough to ensure that all, especially the most able, are able to move on quickly enough.
- Teaching in the early years is outstanding. In depth assessments inform planning in detail for each child and all staff have a clear and precise understanding of how to support learning in each session.
- Teachers and teaching assistants across the school always have pupils' individual targets clearly in mind and ensure they incorporate them into all aspects of learning.
- Communication underpins every lesson and the development of communication through speech, sign, symbols, pictures, objects and technology is extremely well-matched to individual pupil's needs. Staff work hard to ensure they use the appropriate communication strategies for each child to help them make their needs and wishes known, to begin to learn numbers and letter sounds and to enjoy sensory experiences, such as tasting new foods or feeling the stroke of a feather.
- Although staff are becoming increasingly skilled in managing the communication, learning and behavioural needs of pupils with autism spectrum conditions, this is not yet as consistent across the school as for other pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form very effective teams. The care and well-being of pupils is always paramount and staff at all levels are willingly taking on the additional requirement to train to administer

medication. Teaching promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons. Sometimes this is at a very basic level of, for example, hand awareness or by singing number rhymes. The few most able pupils are given additional support to develop their functional reading and writing skills, to enjoy books and to record information. Sixth form students who had been at college off site in the morning were supported by staff to use technology to write up their experiences of creating art work about fireworks night during their media studies session.

- Pupils are encouraged to understand and use technology by exploring and using familiar household equipment, such as washing machines and microwaves. Staff support some of the most able pupils to explore information about the topics they are studying using computers.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Due to their complex learning difficulties and disabilities, when children start school, their level of skill, knowledge and understanding is always very low and for most it remains very low throughout their time in school. In the early years, children make rapid progress from their starting points, particularly in their communication, physical development and personal social skills.
- Gradually tiny steps of progress are built upon and achievement, for the large majority of pupils, is at least good and for some it is outstanding. Achievements may seem to be as simple as demonstrating pleasure and anticipating repeated actions, such as having water poured over them in the swimming pool or by smiling when given a familiar object. Such steps can mean huge progress for some pupils.
- Overall, the most able pupils across the school do well. Older pupils enjoy researching independently on the internet, although they may need help to record the information found. However, their achievement in lessons is sometimes held back when they learn as part of a whole group. They are not always moved on to harder work quickly enough.
- Pupils make at least the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics and a good proportion do better than expected. The school ensures it sets targets to challenge pupils to make the best possible progress they can. In this small school, variations in data can often be due to an individual pupils' performance in a subject. There have been recent improvements in pupils' reading skills due to the school's focus on the teaching of this subject and the introduction of new reading materials.
- Every individual pupil is well known and their equal opportunities are assured so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those from minority ethnic groups do equally as well as other pupils and sometimes better. The performance of the smaller proportion of girls is on a level with that of the boys. The school uses pupil premium very appropriately to provide interventions for individual pupils and to take part in the 'Achievement for All' programme. This has resulted in there being no gaps in performance in this school.
- Students in the sixth form all achieve an externally accredited award and their attendance at the local college contributes to this. The award demonstrates how well they can use their literacy and numeracy skills for everyday functions, together with a basic understanding of how to look after themselves, for example, by washing, shopping and cooking simple meals.
- Pupils with autism spectrum conditions in the specialist class have begun work on the Duke of Edinburgh Award to find alternative activities in which they can enjoy success. It is hoped that this will be extended to other pupils. Sometimes pupils with autism spectrum conditions do not make rapid enough progress because not all staff yet are highly skilled in supporting the learning and behavioural needs of these pupils.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The teacher in charge of the early years leads and manages this area exceptionally well. She is a highly skilled and effective practitioner in working with young children with very complex needs and ensures they get the best possible start to their time at the school.
- Admissions are sensitively managed and can be very gradual to meet the individual needs of children and their parents. Contact with parents to ensure the setting has all the information it requires, to share any concerns parents may have about the child's care and well-being and to involve the parents in the child's progress, are given the highest priority. The same high priority is given to children's safety as in the rest of the school.
- Children make outstanding progress from very low starting points, including in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They enjoy sharing snack times, make steps in their early communication by

learning to request food and drink and begin to acknowledge others in the group.

- The environment is filled with carefully chosen, stimulating resources. The teacher and teaching assistants are skilled in communicating with children about what they are doing and encouraging them to try new things. In a sensory story, children enjoyed exploring seashells in sand, listening to the sea in them and feeling the different textures. As they progress, children begin to join in familiar songs and the most able are able to fill in the final words when staff leave gaps.
- Children's often tiny steps of progress are exceptionally well assessed by the class team who are very knowledgeable about what to watch out for in order to identify children's small achievements.
- Behaviour is managed exceptionally well, particularly for those children with autism who find it very difficult to comply with the school's routines at first. Staff look for every opportunity to engage them in learning and communication, for example, by insisting on an exchange of symbol for a snack and by looking for opportunities to share in children's play when they are ready to let staff join them.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students in the sixth form have a very wide range of abilities and the two separate classes follow very different curriculum pathways designed to develop their basic skills and increase independence according to their needs. One of the classes is a mixed Key Stage 4 and 5 class.
- All students begin to explore work-related learning in Key Stage 4 and this continues in the sixth form. The most able group attend a local college supported by school staff. They enjoy modules of work which contribute to the achievement of an external award. They go on work experience placements in the community which are matched to their individual needs and interests where appropriate.
- At present, the achievement of external awards is limited. The lead teacher for the sixth form is relatively new in post but is exploring alternative awards to demonstrate students' skills and knowledge.
- Students are well taught. Staff work well together to support students' independence and to provide a more adult-focused curriculum but this is less well developed for the lower ability group than for the most able students. Some students who are less able attend vocational sessions at another college, well-supported by staff following appropriate risk assessments and often with a gradual build-up. Staff ensure students' safety and well-being and monitor their good behaviour at all times, including when they attend the off-site provisions.
- Transitions to following placements are very well-managed with staff sharing information with new providers and ensuring students are comfortable with the arrangements by making visits and meeting new support staff from the setting.

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	119893
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	447886

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Knell
Headteacher	Liz Davies
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
Telephone number	01772 336342
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	enquiries@coppice.lancs.sch.uk

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