

Churchill Special Free School

Chalkstone Way, Haverhill, CB9 0LD

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The exemplary leadership of the headteacher provides clear direction and support to staff which ensures high outcomes for pupils. This is complemented by rigorous monitoring systems which are effectively used to evaluate and improve the school's performance.
- Staff and leaders at all levels, including governors, are relentless in pursuing the highest learning aspirations for every pupil.
- Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress both academically and in their personal and social development.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding. Pupils feel safe at school and are keen to say how happy they are because they feel understood and helped to achieve their potential.
- There is excellent partnership working between school staff and other professionals, including therapists. This is further complemented by high quality professional development and coaching opportunities for staff contributing to the highly effective practice evident in the school.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers, in close collaboration with other staff, plan learning that meets pupils' different needs extremely well.
- Teachers accurately assess what pupils already know and can do when they join the school, then build on this very effectively. They use this information to set pupils aspirational targets for improvement.
- High quality support and challenge from the Samuel Ward Multi Academy Trust ensures leaders and governors are constantly reflecting upon and improving their work.
- The creative and inspiring curriculum is planned in partnership with the mainstream secondary school on the same site. This enables pupils to access a broad curriculum and wide range of qualifications. They do so with much success, which helps to prepare them for their next steps in education exceptionally well.
- The passionate ethos shared by all staff places aspirational outcomes for every pupil at the heart of all the school does. This is underpinned by the high quality care and support given to each individual pupil.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons and parts of lessons. All observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector examined pupils' individual education plans and the quality of work in their books. They also looked at the school's information regarding the progress pupils make in their learning over time.
- The inspector held meetings with pupils; the school's senior leaders, teachers and other staff; and the chair and two other representatives of the governing body. A discussion with the executive headteacher from the Samuel Ward Multi Academy Trust was also held.
- The inspector took into account responses to the school's own survey of its parents and staff alongside the responses to the online survey (Parent View). The 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also considered.
- Safeguarding information, data on pupils' attendance and documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Mary Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2013. It is located on the same campus as an outstanding mainstream school. The schools are both members of the same academy trust.
- The school is a small school which caters for pupils who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The majority of pupils are White British. There are significantly more boys than girls who attend the school.
- While the school currently has one student in the sixth form, this development is at too early a stage to make a separate judgement on the quality of the sixth form provision.
- Most pupils have speech, language and communication needs or autistic spectrum disorders; a few have multi-sensory impairment.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for government support through the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
- Pupils attend from three counties: Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. The majority are transported to and from school by taxis or minibuses.
- The school has no pupils who are looked after by a local authority.
- The school is part of the Samuel Ward Multi Academy Trust whose executive headteacher provides additional support for leadership in this school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and executive headteacher provide uncompromising drive and support to ensure all pursue high quality, excellent outcomes for pupils. This is underpinned by high quality monitoring of an exceptionally well-informed governing body. The headteacher is exemplary in her practice and relentlessly pursues the best academic and personal outcomes for all groups of pupils at the school.
- This committed and passionate leadership results in a powerful ethos that places personalised learning, and the outcomes which consider the needs of the whole child, at the heart of all the school does. This is promoted by the entire staff who demonstrate high aspirations for all pupils through their high quality teaching.
- Leaders' accurate self-evaluation rightly reflects a provision which is striving for excellence at every opportunity. In addition, the Trust provides a core offer of administrative and professional support that ensures all policies and procedures are robust and effective. However, this does not distract from the uniqueness of Churchill Special Free School.
- Every aspect of school life is inclusive and demonstrates respect and tolerance. Pupils have a strong sense of their role within British society and demonstrate a good understanding of the benefits of democracy and the need for tolerance and respect. They develop their understanding through becoming ambassadors for a specific value such as respect. In an example of insightful reflection a pupil responsible for tolerance wrote: 'I want to be judged for who I am'.
- Well-managed and planned integration with the adjacent secondary school plays a large part in the school life of many of the pupils, with over two thirds of pupils accessing some lessons in the secondary school. With a commendable emphasis on inclusion, both schools follow the same timetable and curriculum. As a result, pupils are able to access a diverse curriculum which stretches their skills and knowledge. It promotes equality of opportunity and access to a wide range of qualifications.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is very strong and permeates through every aspect of the school. From a starting point of limited social understanding, pupils' ability to function in social, moral and spiritual situations is outstandingly well supported. Pupils' cultural experiences are enhanced through their work at the mainstream school.
- Leaders and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is successfully used to enhance resources for additional therapeutic input. This includes high quality staff training as well as one-to-one work with pupils. Consequently, a consistent approach to communication between staff and pupils, and the use of occupational therapy is evident in all aspects of school life, work and play. As a result, pupils make great leaps in developing effective communications skills.
- Leaders effectively use the sport funding to increase pupils' participation and develop a broader variety of sports. As a result, many pupils have participated in sports activities alongside their mainstream peers; all learning the value of playing and succeeding together as a team.
- All middle leaders, including class teachers and health professionals, have introduced and fully promoted an exceptional system for accurately assessing pupils' progress in all subjects and in their personal development. Staff write and implement detailed personal education plans which include challenging targets pupils are expected to achieve. Progress towards these targets is rigorously checked and ensures that all groups of pupils, whatever their levels of need, often make exceptional progress.
- Work experience makes a very positive contribution to the achievement of pupils. Risk assessments take into account individual needs and staff work to ensure that they have the support and skills necessary to be successful. Teachers work effectively with pupils to develop academic and career pathways encouraging ambitious but realistic future life choices.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have an accurate view of the performance of the school. They epitomise the values and ethos of the school. Through regular monitoring visits they ensure that they are kept up to date with developments and the improvements. They have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching and are fully involved in all aspects of the management of teachers' performance, including of the headteacher. They know what is being done to reward and challenge teaching and are rigorous in ensuring value for money.
- The governing body has received appropriate training in safeguarding, recruitment and financial management. Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirement, they are well established and are reviewed regularly.
- Governors are aware of the performance of every pupil and celebrate achievements while always challenging progress. Governors have the skills to monitor robustly the impact of interventions and therapies, including speech and language therapy.
- Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and other senior staff, and ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They make regular visits to find out for themselves the quality of education and its impact.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are learning to self-regulate and manage their behaviours. This is a substantial success for pupils for whom this has been a significant challenge in the past. Pupils are happy to be members of this school community; this is reflected in the increasing attendance of pupils over time.
- The majority of pupils have significantly improved their attendance since joining the school. Past school refusers and pupils for whom attending school has been a challenge have attendance rates that are now above the national average. Absences are followed up very quickly; good communication with families helps pupils attend regularly.
- Pupils often join the school as a result of behaviour difficulties in a previous setting, these difficulties are extremely well supported by all adults, and, often, by other pupils. This means that pupils are able to self regulate this behaviour and so focus on their academic achievement. As a result they are very well prepared for life beyond school.
- Pupils behave well at lunch and break times; they respect, care for and support each other. For example, when playing football, they manage their own teams encouraging and rewarding each other.
- Pupils share and celebrate each other's achievements, they are proud of their successes.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school 'because staff have taught us how to manage ourselves and our feelings', they say they are confident that staff would deal with any concerns that might occur.
- The number of recorded behaviour incidents over the past year has reduced significantly and the school's monitoring reflects that incidents are followed up and resolved appropriately; recording of the few serious incidents is detailed. This information is used to enable staff to reflect on their practice and to re-engage pupils more effectively. As a consequence reoccurrence of the difficulties is reduced.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The atmosphere in school is an exceptionally positive and happy one where pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence. This is recognised and effectively summarised by a pupil who said 'this is a safe place for me, there is always someone who will listen to me'.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms that bullying can take and their knowledge of e-safety is

very good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' learning encourage pupils to keep themselves and others safe and to be aware of risks associated with sexual exploitation, breaking the law, radicalisation, and other negative or discriminatory behaviours.

- Parents talk very highly of the safe school environment where their children are able to flourish. One said 'The school has given my child the safe learning environment that he needs, he feels valued and understood. This has had a very positive effect on his self-esteem and his emotional well-being'.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because it is consistently well matched to the individual needs of each pupil. Teachers' detailed lesson planning ensures that work is also well matched to support the personal and learning targets of each pupil.
- Teaching assistants and other adult support, including parent volunteers, offer just the right amount of advice to individual pupils. They are patient and understanding, giving time for pupils to make a response. They challenge pupils and draw out additional thoughts and ideas. The skilful approach of teaching assistants and their ability to withdraw when pupils are being successful means that pupils do not become over reliant upon them but learn to be independent. An example of the success of this approach is that one Year 10 pupil now attends mainstream lessons on their own.
- A key strength of the school is the highly positive relationships between staff and pupils which create a helpful climate for learning in lessons and in all areas of the school's work.
- Staff are well trained to make good use of a wide range of communication techniques and programmes which build well on the speech and language therapy offered to pupils. Consequently, training staff are able to model language and communication techniques including signed support, enabling pupils to recognise social cues and listen to others. One pupil remarked that he could now look people in the eye when having a conversation.
- Pupils are able to record their work in a wide range of ways which reflect their needs and abilities. They were seen by inspectors to use a range of technologies. Books show that these are often used to encourage and engage pupils in developing the presentation of their work and also to ensure increasing levels of independence.
- Staff use a range of strategies including one-to-one support, therapy sessions, small groups and whole class teaching. The good communication between all adults ensures that these methods contribute effectively to pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils know how to improve their learning because teachers' consistent feedback is of high quality and specifically tailored for individuals. Pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work and any mistakes are not repeated.
- Questioning is used very effectively to deepen knowledge and to test learning; staff frequently check how well pupils have understood what is being taught. Questioning is often used cleverly to prompt pupils to express their own views. Staff are able to change their vocabulary and use a range of communication methods to ensure their interaction best supports the individual they are working with.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively and pupil's literacy and numeracy skills are developed in all subjects across the curriculum. Excellent use of resources stimulates pupils' development of vocabulary, language and writing skills. For example, in a history lesson pupils were keen to touch and describe a costume, resulting in expressive and detailed written accounts.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Taking into account individual starting points, length of time in school and pupils' significant difficulties with communication and social interaction, pupils make outstanding progress. The school's detailed and robust assessment information shows that pupils' progress accelerates once they settle into school and the longer they stay the better they do.
- Targets for individual pupils are broken down into small steps by skilful staff who have high expectations, but who understand the ever changing needs of their pupils.
- Pupils of all ages make significant progress in literacy skills, particularly in the area of speaking and listening. The school works alongside highly qualified and capable speech and language therapists to ensure that pupils' progress in communication is based on clear and challenging targets. As a result a high number of pupils make more than expected progress.
- Pupils' progress towards their academic and personal development targets is planned in detail and regularly reviewed. As a result each individual makes the progress of which they are capable in every aspect of their development.
- The school's data show that pupils supported by the pupil premium make outstanding improvements in many aspects of their school life, both academic and personal. Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points in all subjects in all year groups. There is no noticeable gap with their peers. The progress pupils make is above the national average in English and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils make outstanding progress as a result of personalised teaching programmes, robust tracking of their performance and aspirational targets. The majority of the most-able pupils enter the school significantly underperforming as their additional needs have not previously been met. With the support of adults, pupils make rapid progress and have attained outcomes significantly above expectations.
- Assessment on entry to the school is excellent. Staff pinpoint gaps in pupils' knowledge and work effectively using challenging and high quality teaching to close these thereby contributing the excellent progress pupils make.

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	139732
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	450151

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June McNaughton
Headteacher	Georgina Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01440 760338
Email address	headteacher@churchillschool.co.uk

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