

# Swiss Cottage School, Development & Research Centre

80 Avenue Road, London, NW8 6HX

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- The school meets fully its key aim of providing an education that develops pupils' self-confidence, their strategies and skills for successful learning and their ability to use them in all aspects of life. Their achievement is outstanding.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points to the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in literacy and numeracy, as well as in their communication skills.
- Children attending the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress. This prepares them exceptionally well for learning and enables them to move on successfully to the next stage of their education at the school.
- The sixth form is good. The new sixth form, part of the upper school, is improving rapidly its effectiveness in providing a high quality teaching. Many pupils now continue into the sixth form; students make good progress there, and are being thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education at further education colleges or other training opportunities.
- Pupils and students say the school and the alternative provision site are safe places to learn. The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust, including careful checking of the alternative provision site.
- Pupils' and students' behaviour in and around the school and at the alternative provision site is excellent. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding because of interesting lessons and the high quality and effective support pupils receive from all adults in the room.
- The principal, her senior leaders, the extended leadership team and governors have been highly effective in leading and managing the changes in the nature of the school's intake and the rapid growth in pupil and staff numbers since September 2012. As a result, improvements in teaching and achievement have been sustained.
- The highly experienced Chair of the Governing Body and his governors know the school very well. They are particularly effective in holding the school to account and have been fully supportive of the school throughout its recent changes.
- The high quality support and training offered by the Development and Research Centre helps mainstream and special school staff at home and abroad develop their confidence and expertise in supporting their own pupils with special educational needs as well as sharing best practice beyond Swiss Cottage.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 17 different teachers and two higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) team teaching. Nine of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with a mixed group of group of Year 11 students and a mixed group of Year 13 students. Meetings were also held with the principal and the senior leadership team, others with posts of responsibility, the head of the Research and Development Centre, the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector took account of 42 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 146 responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, the lead inspector responded to a parent who requested a telephone conversation, a parent accompanying her child to school spoke with one of the team inspectors and the lead inspector received a formal letter from another parent.
- The inspectors observed the school’s practice and looked at a range of documentation, including its checks on how well it is doing, improvement planning, information on pupils’ progress, documents used by senior leaders to check the school’s work and Governing Body documentation, as well as records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

Mary Geddes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- There have been substantial changes in the school's provision since the previous inspection. It now has a sixth form, which opened in November 2012 when the school moved from a period of using temporary sites across Camden to purpose-built accommodation on its original site. This was part of the Building Schools for the Future project.
- The nature of the school's intake has also changed, mainly as the result of the closure of another special school in the borough in August 2012. There are now significantly higher numbers of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The school continues to provide for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). In addition, many have a range of further complex needs.
- In April 2012, the school was designated as a Teaching School and in October of the same year it opened its Development and Research Centre, which has a local, national and overseas remit.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils are boys. There are similar proportions of pupils from White, Asian British (mainly Bangladeshi) and Black or Black British (mainly African) backgrounds. A few are from mixed backgrounds. A majority are from homes where English is not the home language. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils at the school eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and children from service families, is well above the national average. Currently, there are very few in local authority care and no pupils from service families.
- The school is divided into lower, middle and upper schools, all with their own separate areas. Most classes within the schools are organised by learning needs rather than by age.
- Pupils new to the school are usually admitted in September but there are also admissions throughout the year.
- A group of Year 11 pupils attends for one half day weekly the College of North West London.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of written feedback for older more able pupils so they clearly understand how to improve further their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage, careful assessment shows they are working at levels well below those expected for their ages. However, they make rapid and sustained progress against the early learning goals assessment targets and are ready to move on to learn in Year 1.
- Throughout the school, individual learning intention plans are provided and targets are set for improvement in the important skills of literacy, numeracy and communication, as well as for personal development such as in developing independence.
- By the end of Year 11, in relation to their starting points, pupils make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well as a result of the help and support they receive from all adults working in the room, as well as from therapists and other specialist professionals. Those who leave all move on to further education or training and have sustained their placements.
- Year 11 pupils attending college for one half-day a week also achieve exceptionally well in relation to the courses studied. The provision made for them at college is excellent.
- Achievement is outstanding irrespective of individual special educational needs or disabilities.
- Many now stay at the school to join the sixth form, which is only in its second year. Currently, regular monitoring of progress shows students' rates of progress are improving rapidly and being sustained in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and communication skills, as well as in the life and living accredited course.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress because teachers set tasks which are hard enough to ensure they meet the targets set as part of their individual learning intention plans. Progresses towards these targets and pupils' small steps in learning are diligently recorded during lessons and new targets set when appropriate.
- As a result of excellent quality teaching and highly focused individual support, there are no particular differences in the rates of progress made by pupils with different levels of learning difficulties, by boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, those from homes where English is not the home language and the very few children looked after by the local authority.
- Similarly, there are no particular differences in the rates of progress made by different groups of sixth form students.
- The progress of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is in line with that of their classmates in literacy, numeracy and communication skills across the school; like their classmates, their attainment levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 vary widely because of the wide variation in their starting points. The school receives no Year 7 catch-up funding.
- In almost all lessons, pupils' progress is typically outstanding. There is effective support for developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and communication skills. For example, in a lower school English lesson, pupils listened carefully to sounds and successfully matched these to pictures of objects on the table in front of them. In an upper school mathematics lesson, pupils met their individual targets of sorting and separating different objects by similarity, such as shape, texture and colour. In all lessons, a range of different means of communication are used highly effectively to support well non-verbal pupils' learning.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teaching throughout the school promotes outstanding learning for all. Teaching in English and mathematics is outstanding. In an upper school English lesson, more able pupils discussed holiday destinations before completing a written planning sheet with helpful support from all adults in the room. They then successfully researched their chosen holiday destinations in order to produce an illustrated folder of work.

- In a lower school mathematics lesson, pupils made excellent progress in developing their counting and sorting skills because of staff's demonstrations, clear instructions and use of key words. More able pupils are also provided with challenging work and tasks. In an upper school English lesson, pupils completed a written task where the key focus was on the use of speech marks.
- Teachers and all adults working in the room work exceptionally well with one another and have high expectations in relation to pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Their focused support for individual pupils and their adept skills at managing pupils' individual needs keeps them interested and on task. This results in pupils making excellent progress towards their individual targets.
- Pupils' small steps in learning are carefully recorded and used to plan future activities for them. In a sixth form life skills lesson, highly effective questioning was used to check students' learning, as well as the use of a digital camera to record the outcomes of their work presentations. Less able pupils also make excellent progress. In a physical education lesson, the teacher guided supporting adults to note carefully the small steps made in all aspects of physical development from the smallest movements to skills development in, for example, catching a ball.
- As well as highly effective verbal feedback in lessons, teachers provide written comments for the more able. However, as a result of checking by senior leaders, the school recognises that the quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always make clear exactly what it is pupils need to do to achieve their next steps in learning.
- Without exception, parents and carers who responded to Parent View consider their child to be taught well and that they receive valuable information about the progress their child is making. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors confirmed lessons were interesting and that there were lots of things to do. One commented, 'Teachers listen to us and help us.'

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

- The behaviour of pupils, including sixth form students, is outstanding. This is because the school is a happy and well-managed community with high levels of adult support and consistent routines throughout the day. Out-of-lesson activities and visits off-site are carefully checked to ensure they pose no risk to pupils or compromise their usual behaviour in the school. Highly effective relationships between all adults and pupils result in an enjoyable, purposeful and safe atmosphere throughout the whole school day, including at the alternative provision. Pupils respect the fabric of the new building and its surroundings, saying they really like the new spacious accommodation.
- Typically, behaviour over time had varied, depending on particular needs and cohorts of pupils and the unsettled period when the school was being rebuilt. There have been no recorded instances of bullying, homophobic bullying or sexual misconduct since the new school opened and there have been a very few racist incidents; records show that these incidents were dealt with promptly and effectively. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years and there are now far fewer pupils who have not been allowed to go to school for short periods of time because of poor behaviour.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent, which is as a result of interesting lessons and the fact that activities provided are matched carefully to pupils' learning needs and abilities. Pupils respond readily to the sensitive and calm approach from all adults, which helps them stay on task throughout lessons. Underpinning this is the staffs' respect for pupils' dignity, well-being and their developing independence. Pupils arrive happily in the morning, remain happy throughout the day and leave contented at the end of the day.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This applies to both the school and to the alternative provision Year 11 pupils attend. It is overseen effectively by the Governing Body. Internet safety has a high priority, with access denied to social networking and other inappropriate sites when pupils are on-line. Pupils told inspectors that they know about different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying. They feel safe, are taught how to stay safe and said

there was no bullying.

- The school's work to maintain good levels of attendance pays dividends; overall attendance has continued to improve as unauthorised absences have fallen. As almost all pupils are 'bussed' to school, punctuality at the start of the day is reliant on daily local traffic conditions.
- Parents and carers who responded to Parent View are happy with the school's care for their children. This was also confirmed by the responses to the staff questionnaire and by the pupils who met with the inspectors.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- Leadership and management are outstanding because of the principal's passionate drive and determined ambition to provide the best education possible for all. Supported by senior leaders and governors, this has led to continuing and sustained improvement over time through a period of significant change. All staff are highly committed to ensuring the best outcomes possible for all pupils and preparing them successfully for life beyond the school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage and the Development and Research Centre are exceptionally well led. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and improving in effectiveness.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Clear targets for teachers to improve further the quality of their work are then set. At the end of each year, recommendations are made regarding additional responsibilities and training opportunities.
- As a result of the school's unyielding commitment to equality, all pupils, regardless of circumstances or needs, make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points in their learning and personal development. The extra support and guidance pupils are given supports their excellent all-round personal development.
- The subjects and topics pupils study are tailored to match fully the abilities and individual needs of all. The strong focus on developing pupils' key skills of communication, independence, physical development and self-care prepare them very well for the next stage of their education. This contributes significantly to their strong all-round personal development. An impressive range of other extra activities makes learning even more interesting. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- The highly effective support from other professionals as well as from its own team of highly experienced therapists support pupils' wide-ranging learning needs particularly well. The work of the Development and Research Centre is highly regarded in partnership schools both in England and abroad.
- The school maintains very close links with parents and carers, including providing high quality written advice on its website on how to support pupils' different learning needs at home. This they appreciate, as is evident in their positive responses to Parent View and attendance at Parent Council meetings.
- The local authority has provided good support to this outstanding school, especially throughout the recent new building programme and the school's changing nature of provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The highly experienced Chair and his Governing Body work closely with the school to secure continuing initiatives. They are prepared to challenge senior leaders, if necessary, in order to sustain improvement. Governors' specific areas of expertise support their effectiveness in their roles. For example, a member with responsibility for safeguarding helps make sure procedures and protocols are robust and effective in the school and that off-site provision is also a safe place in which to learn. The governing body has a strong understanding of performance data, of the quality of teaching in the school in supporting outstanding achievements and of the use of performance management. After checking the work of the principal and other staff, governors make appropriate decisions about how well they are working and any action that needs to be taken, as well as training opportunities and pay.
  - The finance committee is highly effective in ensuring the school's finances are balanced, and in carefully overseeing the use and impact of the pupil premium funding. Current funding is

being used to provide extra help to parents and carers to help them support their children's learning at home, as well as for extra one-to-one support for literacy and numeracy across the school. Not all the allocated funding for the support of primary physical education and school sport has yet been received by the school so there is insufficient evidence of its impact. Plans are in place for the total funding to be used to support the work of the school's sports team.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100096
<b>Local authority</b>	Camden
<b>Inspection number</b>	430650

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	232
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Sprinz
<b>Principal</b>	Kay Bedford OBE
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–12 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7681 8080
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