

Portesbery School

Portesbery Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3SZ

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Almost all pupils, including those with additional needs, achieve well. Progress in language, communication, and literacy, and in personal development is good.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage class achieve well in each area of learning.
- The sixth form is good. The achievements of pupils in the sixth form have improved. They achieve well and have effective opportunities for independence, accreditation and vocational skills.
- Mostly good and some outstanding teaching mean that pupils make at least good progress in their activities. Learning is supported well through the very effective use of signs, symbols and switches to promote communication and understanding.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are safe and secure at school.
- Pupils benefit from many exciting learning experiences, including the many additional visits that engage them well.
- Parents are rightly pleased with their child's education.
- Pupils are well cared for. Good quality integrated therapies contribute well to their health, well-being and learning.
- Through regular monitoring and efficient planning, the governing body makes sure that money is spent well for the benefit of all pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for additional funding.
- The headteacher has a clear vision and is strongly supported by senior leaders, including governors. Together, they provide an effective focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through regular high quality training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On occasion, lesson planning does not fully meet the needs and abilities of all pupils.
- Sometimes pupils are not given enough time to respond to questions, and this slows the pace of their learning.
- Behaviour interventions are not tracked regularly over time so that their impact can be measured.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, all of them jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a few short visits to different sessions to observe pupils' activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the school council, a local authority representative, two therapists and three members of the governing body.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' profiles.
- The inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View), a letter from a parent and a conversation with another parent by telephone during the inspection. The inspectors also took account of staff views from the school's own recent staff survey.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Geddes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Portesbery is a special school for pupils with a statement of special educational needs for their severe or profound learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorders, physical, and sensory impairments.
- Pupils use a wide range of communication aids, including technology, and a few are wheelchair users.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and pupils with a parent in the armed forces) is about average.
- The proportions of pupils from ethnic backgrounds other than White British, and those who speak English as an additional language, are above average.
- The school has integrated provision to provide for pupils' educational, health and social care needs. This includes on-site nursing, physiotherapy, speech therapy, music therapy and its own hydrotherapy pool.
- The school provides outreach support and teaching for a very small minority of pupils who are too ill to attend school.
- No alternative off-site provision is used by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all groups of pupils make even better progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers always plan tasks that fully meet the individual needs and abilities of every pupil
 - pupils always have enough time to respond to questions in class, including making choices.
- Track evidence of pupils' behaviour so that the impact of interventions can be measured over time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well during their time at Portesbery School irrespective of their disabilities or particular special educational needs. All groups make similarly good progress including those who speak English as an additional language and those from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The strong emphasis on linking letters and sounds provides pupils with a good understanding of early reading and writing. In a primary class, for example, three pupils with autistic spectrum disorders made sentences about their weekend activities accurately using symbols, reading them out clearly to their teacher.
- Progress is good, and sometimes outstanding, because teachers use effective strategies to motivate and engage pupils. Some outstanding achievement was evident during a sensory story with two primary pupils with severe learning difficulties. Both were in their standing frames and were keen to engage with the story. They smiled and watched intently and reached out to touch the 'wind' from the hairdryer and the 'rain' from the water spray.
- Most pupils, including the youngest children in the Reception and Nursery class, develop good language skills because of the high quality of their communication aids, signs and symbols. Their achievement in mathematics is good. In a small minority of lessons adults do not wait long enough for pupils to use these aids to provide a response to questions, limiting pupils' progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from good quality provision and exciting resources. They quickly settle and learn to be independent. They were seen making very good use of the picture exchange communication system (PECS) to respond to questions about themselves and to make choices.
- Older pupils in the sixth form have their own discrete accommodation relevant to their abilities and age and make good progress in acquiring skills in independent living. They travel to the local shops, purchase ingredients, and cook their own lunches. They have appropriate opportunities to attend college, achieve accreditation and undertake vocational experiences in local businesses.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. The extra funds are used effectively, to employ additional staffing to meet these pupils' individual needs, enabling them to participate fully in all activities. As a result, they achieve as well as other pupils. All groups of students who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics, as measured by their improvements and their accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Parents are rightly pleased with their children's progress. One typical comment was, 'The school has been incredibly supportive, approachable and involved with parents and pupils. Any issues are quickly responded to.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching is evident across the school. In most lessons teachers plan tasks that fully match individual needs so that pupils can complete them calmly and feel pleased with their efforts. When this happens, pupils' behaviour improves, the pupils stay fully engaged and make good, and sometimes outstanding, gains in their learning.
- There are occasions, however, when lesson planning does not fully meet individual needs and, consequently, the pace of learning of some pupils slows.
- Questioning is generally used well to improve pupils' skills and encourage the pupils to make choices. At these times, skilled staff extend pupils' understanding by challenging the pupils to find answers and waiting for them to do so. Just occasionally pupils are not given the time they need to respond vocally or through their communication aids. As a result, in a very few lessons, the pace of pupils' learning dips and pupils do not then do enough tasks in the time allowed.
- Relationships in lessons are positive and disruptions due to pupils' sometimes challenging

behaviour are very rare. Lessons are calm and productive.

- Teachers and support staff work well together so that there is a clear understanding of what is expected of each pupil. Support staff offer good quality guidance and have equally high expectations of the pupils in their groups.
- Pupils' achievements are accurately recorded through observations during lessons, annotations of their successes and through photographs. Information about their achievements is gathered regularly and each pupil's successes are carefully checked to ensure that pupils are all making at least the progress expected of them. This information is mostly used well to inform future planning.
- Teachers ensure that lessons are linked clearly to previous learning. Older pupils in the sixth form proudly show comprehensive files of work that form part of their accreditation studies. Books and work for other pupils are of a good quality, showing a comprehensive record of past work.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through celebrations of different cultures, through theatre productions, music and visits into the community.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school, enjoy seeing their friends and know who to go to for help. They say that they particularly like swimming and that they feel safe at school and their parents agree.
- The vast majority of pupils get on well with each other. No evidence of bullying of any type was seen during the inspection and none is evident in the school's records. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any concerns they have.
- Pupils' behaviour is well managed and there are examples of pupils, who have difficulties with their emotional and social skills, improving their behaviour because of specific targets and the use of rewards. The vast majority of parents rightly say that behaviour at the school is good and that their children are safe and secure.
- Just occasionally pupils' challenging behaviour causes some disruptions to the learning of others and intervention strategies are used successfully to enable pupils to keep calm and learn to manage their behaviour. Interventions are rightly recorded, but are not tracked over time to show evidence of any improvements in behaviour.
- Pupils' social and moral development is fostered well through enabling pupils to take on simple responsibilities. One primary pupil, for example, helpfully gave out scissors to his classmates, whilst an older boy from the secondary department helped to prepare a 'sensory circuit' around the hall for his less able peers. He took the work seriously and showed a mature attitude in carrying out his responsibilities.
- Pupils take part regularly in sports activities. Almost half of all pupils attend at least one after-school sports club; they benefit from links with Chelsea Football Club, as well as drama and musical activities to improve their skills, have fun and keep fit and healthy. Pupil premium funding is used to support pupils who are eligible, so that they can attend these clubs with their peers.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is above that found in most other special schools.
- Sixth form pupils show good levels of independence in their activities. A few are able to walk into town and shop while being shadowed by an adult.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are all new to their roles since the last inspection. Despite this, and despite the high proportion of staff changes since that time, they have successfully maintained the good quality of teaching through the use of the Teachers'

Standards'. Leaders at all levels are fully involved in seeking excellence. They provide high levels of training for all staff to ensure that they are capable of meeting the very challenging and wide ranging needs of all the pupils.

- The curriculum provides effective opportunities for learning and for pupils to extend their confidence and self-esteem. Leaders have built on previous strong practice to ensure that there are many rewarding and enjoyable experiences that prepare pupils well for their futures. For example, pupils make regular visits into the community, take part in expeditions such as the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze challenge, and perform on stage.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. The school has a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' individual needs, resulting in good progress for all pupils whatever their difficulties. For example, the few pupils with communication difficulties have access to good quality music therapy which is helping them to find their voice. Others, with profound learning difficulties, have access to daily physiotherapy, speech therapy and sensory experiences to encourage their responses.
- Leaders also ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to attend school clubs, by funding places. The school is determined to ensure there is no discrimination. Where some pupils cannot gain access, such as those in wheelchairs being unable to take the steep path down to the woods, alternative provision is made for them.
- Performance is effectively managed and rigorously monitored by the headteacher and senior leaders, as well as by the governing body. Regular observations of teaching and learning by school leaders and the local authority make sure that leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is doing.
- The local authority gives effective and focused support to the school, especially in training staff and helping to improve teaching.
- The school has good relationships with parents, other schools and colleges and with a wide range of support services.
- It provides an effective outreach service to ensure that those pupils who are too ill to come to school receive good quality teaching and support in their own homes.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body gives clear direction to the school, and governors are regular visitors. They take frequent learning walks around the school to ensure that they have a clear view of the quality of teaching and learning. They evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement well, receiving regular updates and reports. They have a good understanding of school performance data, including comparisons with similar schools. They fully understand the importance of managing the performance of staff and allocate sufficient funding to good quality training in their drive to improve teaching. They check to ensure that good teachers are rewarded through the school's performance management structure and any underperformance is tackled through additional training, mentoring and regular monitoring. Governors manage the school's finances very well and make sure additional money allocated for the support of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is used for the benefit of those pupils.

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	125474
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	403807

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
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	65
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Carpenter
Headteacher	Matthew Sartin
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 June 2010
Telephone number	01276 63078
Fax number	01276 683641
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