

Knowsley Central School

Mossbrow Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L36 7SY

Inspection dates 14–15 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Every member of staff in this school is totally committed to enabling each and every pupil to be the best they possibly can be.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She and her excellent senior managers have built highly effective teams to deliver a range of services to meet the needs of pupils in the school and in other schools in the borough. They have continued to improve on the outstanding judgements of the previous inspection.
- Outstanding teaching ensures outstanding achievement. Pupils make outstanding progress in their English and mathematics skills so that they are able to use them in their everyday lives by the time they leave school. Very occasionally opportunities are missed, when planning for writing and when pupils' work is marked, to ensure even faster progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils exceptionally well. They build rapidly on their prior learning, planning creative and enjoyable lessons which motivate pupils to want to learn.
- Staff place a high priority on pupils' well-being so that they are ready and eager to join in lessons. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff which are mutually respectful and build pupils' confidence and trust.
- Pupils love coming to school because it is a very happy place and they feel very safe there. Attendance levels are high and behaviour is exceptionally well-managed so that no learning time is lost.
- Children who arrive at the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to an excellent start. Joint work between classroom staff and the school's speech and language therapist help children begin to communicate their needs and wishes.
- The curriculum is innovative and ambitious. Leaders have developed new provision for Key Stage 3 students. They make sure that staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to work with the changing special educational needs and disabilities of the students.
- The governing body has provided exceptionally high-quality support and challenge to the school's leaders. The commitment and stability of governing body membership has been a huge contributory factor in the school's success.
- Outreach guidance, advice and support provided from the school is outstanding. Partner schools cannot speak more highly of the contribution made by the very skilled outreach staff who help them to develop their own expertise.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons. Four of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, with representatives of the governing body including two parent governors, the speech and language therapist, the head of the outreach service, a senior teacher from the service and a headteacher and special educational needs coordinator from partner mainstream primary schools.
- Discussions were held informally with pupils and more formally with a group of student leaders.
- The lead inspector had telephone conversations with the school's improvement partner and with a representative of the local authority.
- Samples of pupils' work and teachers' lesson planning were reviewed.
- Documents, including those relating to pupil progress, safeguarding, behaviour management, school improvement and staff performance management were also scrutinised.
- The views of the 14 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, were taken into account together with two emails from parents and the school's own survey of parent and pupil views. The responses from 25 staff questionnaires returned were also considered.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Knowsley Central School has changed its name since the previous inspection when it was known as Knowsley Central Primary Support Centre.
- The needs of pupils have changed over time. About three-quarters of pupils have an autism spectrum condition as their primary special educational need, with the remaining pupils having a range of complex needs. All pupils currently have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are admitted to the school at other than the usual times and ages.
- Numbers of pupils in the school have increased and since the previous inspection the school has created a Key Stage 3 provision, which is growing. Some of these students enjoy particular lessons with Altbridge Secondary School students.
- The very small number of Early Years Foundation Stage children is in a small class with Year 1 and 2 pupils.
- There are three times as many boys as girls in the school, which is typical for such schools.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is very high at over twice the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for those looked after by the local authority.
- Primary school sports funding is provided for primary aged pupils. The school has not received Year 7 catch-up funding.
- The school provides an outreach support service to schools in the central area of Knowsley. This includes consultancy, training and advice to schools and 36 part-time placements at Knowsley Central School for mainstream primary pupils identified as requiring additional help with their literacy development.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain and build on the already existing high quality of teaching to further improve pupils' achievement by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in all subjects
 - giving pupils, especially the most able, time to practise the 'wishes' included in the marking of their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, associate headteacher, head of outreach and other senior and middle leaders work as a highly effective team to drive improvement. They have found ways to build on the outstanding judgements of the previous inspection, not only to maintain standards but to further improve the provision and outcomes for pupils, parents and staff. They continue to have a vision and ambition to be ever more effective.
- Leaders, including governors, have a very clear understanding of how well each pupil is doing. They intervene quickly to support any pupil who is failing to make the progress expected of them. The school moderates assessments of its pupils' work with partner schools to ensure accuracy.
- Rigorous checks on teachers' performance have raised teaching standards year on year. There is a commitment to high-quality training, coaching and mentoring for staff so that the quality of teaching is never less than good and the majority is outstanding. High performance is linked appropriately to salary increases.
- Partnerships with parents are exceptionally strong. The school hosts meetings and workshops for groups of parents and their excellent links with other agencies ensure the right support is available to help families to manage their children at home where needed. Parents report that the school keeps them very well-informed about what their children are learning and how they are progressing towards their agreed targets.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and innovative, with even the youngest pupils, who may have poor communication skills, studying a modern foreign language. The curriculum is highly appropriate to different age groups as they move through the school. Very detailed attention is paid to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to prepare them for their future lives in modern Britain, especially in their local community. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise their writing skills in English but not so many when they study other subjects.
- The school uses its primary sports funding very effectively. The specialist physical education teacher bought in with the funding has now been employed full-time by the school. Pupils now try new sports, develop new skills and participate in competitions.
- The outreach service is an extremely highly regarded provision, very ably led by 'a fount of knowledge', as a primary school special needs coordinator described the head of outreach. The positive impact on the progress of identified pupils in partner schools is clearly evidenced in the comprehensive tracking data maintained by the service. The local authority is hugely appreciative of the high-quality work of the outreach service.
- The headteacher works with the local authority to influence the strategic development of provision for pupils with special educational needs across the borough.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have provided stability and support to drive forward the vision of senior leaders. They share the aims to continually improve the provision and are rightly proud of the achievements of pupils and staff. They ensure they have knowledge at first hand by taking part in frequent learning walks, by attending 'SHARE' (the parent group) and listening to pupils' views.
 - Governors hold more than the expected numbers of meetings so that they can focus on learning about specific aspects of the school's work to govern more effectively.
 - Governors make sure that they meet the statutory requirements for safeguarding on all sites. They assiduously monitor tracking data to check that the pupil premium is closing the gap for eligible pupils and that the primary sports funding is creating opportunities for pupils to try new sports.
 - Governors know how well teachers are performing through the comprehensive performance management reports they receive and manage their finances extremely well to generate income for future developments. In all of their work, governors are very well supported by the excellent business manager.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Although pupils may display challenging behaviour when they first join the school, the consistent application of behaviour policies and principles, personalised to their

individual needs, quickly help pupils learn how to manage their own behaviour. Behaviour incidents and the strategies to support good behaviour are monitored closely and highly effectively by the behaviour managers.

- Parents report that they quickly see improvements in behaviour at home and know that school staff will provide advice and support when needed through the open-door policy, by phone calls or through the home-school books.
- Excellent relationships are evident across the school. Pupils feel valued and that their views count and can make a difference. As a result they develop extremely positive attitudes to their learning. A pupil commented, 'I had anger issues in my other school. I still have but I know I'm listened to here.'
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered. There are rich opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, to think about the needs and feelings of others, promoting tolerance and acceptance of differences. Older pupils can become student leaders. They take on their duties very seriously, consulting with their peers to present ideas to governors' meetings and to senior leaders to make the school better, for example by designing a new fitness trail or requesting up-to-date tablet computers. The school makes sure that pupils are able to consult effectively through 'Learning Quest' afternoons when governors, staff and parents are able to voice and listen to opinions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The high-quality care and guidance which the school provides, often in partnership with other agencies and with parents, results in pupils developing trust and respect for staff and each other. The restorative practice approach and frequent lessons on feelings help pupils to understand problems from other people's point of view.
- Pupils say, 'Bullying is not tolerated here.' They learn about different forms of bullying, and during the inspection, several classes were following up on some external teaching about e-safety. Strong links with the police service help pupils to understand the dangers of gun and knife crime.
- Many examples were seen during the inspection of kindnesses and kind comments made by pupils to and about each other. For example, peer evaluation of each other's work is a frequent practice and pupils are generous in their comments about the efforts of others.
- Because pupils are happy in school, attendance levels are high. Absences are almost always due to illness.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Across the school the consistently outstanding quality of teaching supports the excellent progress pupils make.
- Frequent pupil-progress meetings are held between senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants so that everyone is clear about the progress of individual pupils. This means teachers can plan lessons and activities to support pupils to make the next steps in their learning. Occasionally, insufficient time is allowed to enable pupils, especially the most able, to practise the challenges identified by the 'wishes' in the marking of their work so that they can move on more quickly.
- There is a constant focus on developing pupils' communication, with knowledgeable staff ably supported by the school's own speech and language therapist. For instance, snack times for younger pupils are used extremely well to encourage them to make simple requests through a range of communication methods to suit their individual needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning exceptionally well to help pupils develop their ideas and express them more clearly. In a Key Stage 3 lesson, students were supported to explain their views about the use of social networks following on from some external training on e-safety the day before.
- The nature of their learning difficulties mean that pupils often find it hard to understand their own and others' emotions but teaching helps them, for example through role-playing good and bad responses to wanting a turn on a bicycle in a Key Stage 2 lesson. Thoughtful questioning helped pupils to think how they might resolve this without conflict.
- Classrooms are warm and friendly places. Teachers and teaching assistants create learning environments where pupils are safe and happy and want to learn and this contributes highly effectively to their outstanding progress.
- Teaching in the specialist classes for part-time pupils attending from partner mainstream schools is of exceptionally high quality. It results in pupils who have been struggling with their literacy making rapid progress.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- A very high proportion of pupils make better progress than is expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics, although writing is not quite as strong as the other areas of learning. The school is working to improve this further. Nevertheless, over the last year almost all pupils made at least the progress expected of them and 88% of pupils exceeded expected progress in English overall with 85% exceeding expected progress in mathematics.
- Comparisons with other similar schools show that Knowsley Central School pupils are achieving outstandingly well in their basic skills. The most able pupils sometimes reach the standards typical for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and leaders frequently raise targets for expected progress to make them more challenging, especially for the most able.
- The very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieve just as well as other pupils in the school through the excellent use of the pupil premium funding. Leaders closely monitor their progress to ensure there are no gaps in their performance compared with other pupils.
- Rates of progress from the end of Key Stage 1 to 2 are sometimes affected by the differing times at which pupils join the school, with only a minority attending throughout their time in primary. Nevertheless, pupils' achievements are outstanding overall and progress in reading, with many pupils making huge leaps forward after joining the school, is a particularly strong area of learning.
- The rigorous monitoring of tracking data makes sure that pupils who occasionally fail to reach targets are quickly identified. The school has trained staff in a range of highly effective programmes which support these pupils to catch up with others.
- Pupils' personal development is regarded as at least as important as their academic progress. Close attention is paid to creating a curriculum which helps pupils to develop good social and moral skills through the extensive personal, social and health programmes.
- Older students are now staying to take up the new Key Stage 3 provision. They develop their independence and life skills extremely well, learning to make beds, sort clothes, buy and cook food, learn about recycling and how to be safe on the internet. They use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in real-life situations. They make good use of the new gardening area and develop mini-enterprises to raise funds for their chosen charities. Some lessons are enjoyed with students at the neighbouring secondary special school, particularly making use of their specialist science, design and technology and physical education facilities. Students say they believe that what they are learning is preparing them very well for the next stage in their education and for their lives in the future.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The number of children entering the school at the Early Years Foundation Stage is generally very small so that they benefit from sharing their education with some older pupils at Year 1 and 2.
- Children enter Nursery or Reception Year with knowledge and skills significantly below those typical for their age but settle quickly into the welcoming environment. The provision offered ensures they can enjoy exciting activities across the seven areas of learning, with excellent resources always focused on developing communication skills.
- Children make at least good and often outstanding progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They build their confidence and enjoy the freedom to try new things for themselves, supported by the trusting relationships with staff who are always on hand to develop their ideas and learning.
- Arrangements to join the school are extremely well planned with parents and other settings. Assessments are continually made by the staff team to ensure children can make rapid progress, especially in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in their physical and emotional health. In particular, children enjoy the very well-equipped outdoor area, which they can use freely.
- Relationships with parents are a real strength. The school provides parents with the opportunity to meet frequently with other parents and professionals through 'SHARE', which is now led by the parents in partnership with the school. This group is very highly valued, particularly by parents of new children who may previously have felt very much on their own.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is very strong with a highly-skilled and knowledgeable lead teacher, and this ensures children make the best possible progress they can from the time they join the school so that they are well-prepared to move into Key Stage 1.

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	104500
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	447742

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	2–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Donnelly
Headteacher	Trish Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
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