

Maplewood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108880
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377841
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Avril Godfrey
Headteacher	Gary Mellefont
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Andrew Johnson
Geraldine Chapman

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. One inspector spent two days in the school and the other one day. Inspectors spent approximately eight hours observing teaching, which included visits to 12 lessons and observations of all the current teachers. In addition, they held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including those related to self-evaluation and development planning. They looked at assessment data and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors evaluated questionnaire responses from 47 parents, 46 pupils and 23 staff. They examined a sample of the pupils' English and mathematics work and an inspector listened to a group of pupils read.

Information about the school

Maplewood is a small primary school which provides for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More than a quarter of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity syndrome. Most pupils enter the school in Key Stage 2 and several have previously spent time in a pupil referral unit. All of the current pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Government floor standards have not been met during the past three years. The school serves the whole of Sunderland. There are many more boys than girls. Nine children are designated as being looked after and all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school holds many awards including Healthy School status. It will move into new purpose-built premises in September 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of children	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of children	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Maplewood is a good school. Many aspects of its work verge on the outstanding. It enables children who have had a very poor start to their education to achieve success for the first time.
- A key strength of the school is the way in which it works with parents and carers. This was reflected in the very high proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires and their overwhelmingly positive comments.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. This represents a huge improvement when compared with their previous history. Procedures to keep them safe are very robust. Bullying is almost non-existent. Pupils enjoy school and attendance levels are above average.
- Teachers provide pupils with activities that engage their interest and keep them on track in lessons. As a result, they make good progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding across a broad range of subjects. Pupils are very well supported by teaching assistants, who build strong supportive relationships with them. In a few cases, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their ability to learn independently, particularly when writing or using mathematics.
- Most pupils start the school with very low levels of attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. Once they have settled in, most make good progress. Pupils who are able to spend longer periods in the school often make outstanding progress. Despite this success, many leave with standards that are still below those expected for their age.
- The school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher has been very successful in creating an inclusive atmosphere in which all children thrive. The use of data to improve pupils' academic progress is exemplary. The process used to evaluate the quality of provision is too complex and plans for improvement lack straightforward and measurable targets.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' abilities to learn independently by:
 - increasing the opportunities they are given to work independently, particularly when developing their writing and mathematical skills
 - making sure the level of support pupils receive is carefully balanced against the need to promote their ability to learn independently.
- Increase the impact that the evaluation of the quality and planning has on outcomes for pupils by:
 - making evaluation systems more straightforward and reports more concise, with an even stronger focus on teaching and learning
 - ensuring plans always contain measurable targets.

Main Report

Achievement of children

Inspectors observed almost all the pupils making good progress in lessons. They developed their understanding, knowledge and skills well across a range of subjects. Despite this, because of their very low starting points, and their late entry to the school, few pupils are at the levels of attainment typical for their age. They make excellent progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. This is particularly important, because in many cases, poor verbal communication skills have been a significant barrier to learning. Initial assessment is accurate and pupils are set challenging targets. Many pupils spent sustained periods in previous schools making little or no progress. A few of the younger pupils are unable to read even the simplest words or write letters of the alphabet when they start at Maplewood.

Girls are in a small minority in the school, but make equally good progress as boys. The school works particularly effectively with the child and adolescent mental health services team, to ensure that pupils whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable, make good progress. Staff take great care to meet the needs of children who are in the care of the local authority and do their best to ensure academic progress is not interrupted by changes to pupils' personal circumstances. Parents and carers report that they are extremely pleased with the progress their children make. Pupils proudly explained to inspectors that they were making good progress for the first time and for some this meant they had, in their words, 'learnt to read from scratch'. Pupils' social and moral development is excellent. They told inspectors that they enjoyed school enormously.

Quality of teaching

Most of the teachers have worked at the school for many years. They have high expectations of themselves and their pupils and use a wide variety of methods to stimulate pupils' interests and enjoyment. Inspectors observed many examples of good teaching. For example, in a science lesson, pupils enjoyed the graphic description of the different parts of the digestive system and related this to their own

diet and health. In a physical education lesson, touch-rugby was used not only to develop pupils' physical skills, but also to develop their confidence, teamwork and restraint.

Inspectors examined pupils' written work and found that it is marked regularly and usually directs them to how they can improve. Pupils say they are clear about what levels they have reached, although at times they struggle to express precisely what it is they need to do to improve. In a few cases, the variety of the work seen in exercise books was limited, particularly in mathematics. The pace of learning is carefully controlled by teachers to ensure pupils' understanding is secure. In most cases this is a good idea, but on occasions, pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn independently and at a faster pace.

Teachers carefully assess the capabilities and learning needs of pupils when they join the school. They quickly build a detailed picture of their pupils' abilities and use this effectively when planning lessons. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders have their complex learning needs identified accurately. Class sizes are very small and pupils receive high levels of support. The effective work of support staff is integral to the success pupils achieve. Misbehaviour is rare but when it does happen, it is quickly nipped in the bud. Teachers use praise and rewards very effectively to build pupils' self-esteem. Teachers are successful in improving reading because they use a phonic approach to teaching that is modified to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Parents and carers feel their children are extremely well taught, for many this is in sharp contrast to their previous experience. These views are typified by parents and carers who commented, 'the staff are fantastic, I couldn't fault them, my son has come on so much, when other schools have failed him' and 'my child had two failed attempts at mainstream, as soon as I entered the building I knew this is where he belonged'. Another parent encapsulated this by simply describing the school as a 'God-send' not only for her child but also for her family.

Behaviour and safety of children

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Parents, carers, staff and pupils agree this is a major strength of the school. Often pupils come to the school with a history of poor behaviour. They put this behind them very quickly and develop positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, friendly and respectful to adults and each other. Taken in the context of their special educational needs or their disabilities, this standard of behaviour is remarkable. Pupils were extremely courteously when inspectors were present and there is compelling evidence that this type of behaviour is typical.

Pupils frequently join classes at time other than the start of the year and teachers are particularly adept at ensuring they settle in quickly without causing disruption to the learning of others. Parents, carers and pupils told inspectors that bullying was very rare. Pupils are keen to support each other and are proud of their school. Teachers use the behaviour management system very effectively and devote a great deal of time to building pupils ability to listen and respond to each other. Pupils say they feel extremely safe. They understand what constitutes unsafe situations and the basic principles of how to keep themselves safe. In the well-supervised breaks and lunchtime there is a calm and orderly atmosphere. Attendance levels are above

average with very low levels of persistent absenteeism. This represents a major improvement in attendance when compared to pupils' records in previous schools.

Exclusions are very rare because staff use effective techniques to prevent minor behavioural problems from escalating. Staff have received extensive training in behaviour management techniques. They use praise very effectively to reinforce small improvements in behaviour.

Leadership and management

Good leadership ensures that staff work as a cohesive and effective team. The headteacher makes sure that boundaries and rules are applied consistently. He leads by example. Senior leaders recognise that many pupils enter the school having been damaged socially and emotionally by their previous experiences of school. They ensure a combination of good teaching and excellent support results in good academic progress.

A good curriculum is provided and personalised to meet the needs of individual pupils. It focuses on the important task of improving pupils' social and moral development. Leaders have recognised that more could be done to develop pupils' cultural and spiritual awareness and recently an increasing range of extra-curricular activities have been offered. On occasions, school transport arrangements and facilities in the current building, limit the schools capacity to offer a wider range of extra-curricular activities. This has been taken into account in the development of the new school building which is due to open in September.

The use of data to assess pupils' progress is a significant strength. It is used to set clear baselines for pupils and set challenging targets for progress. When pupils do not make the expected progress, it enables managers to intervene quickly and assure the quality of teaching remains high. Lessons are observed by the headteacher and strengths and areas for improvement are accurately identified. Staff development opportunities are made readily available and targeted to meet the needs of particular staff.

Good partnerships with other schools are in place. This ensures that the assessment of pupils' achievements is accurate and can be compared with what is expected in mainstream schools. The principles of equality of opportunity and inclusion are at the heart of everything the school does. There is an active school council and pupils' views are sought and taken seriously.

Senior leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the current system to evaluate the quality of provision is too complicated. As a result, measurable targets for improvement are not always articulated in the development plan which limits its impact on improvement. The governing body is very supportive and ensures that the appropriate policies are in place to promote equality, tackle discrimination and ensure safeguarding arrangements. The school has gone from strength to strength in recent years and has a good capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the child's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maplewood School, Sunderland SR5 5PA

I am writing to let you know what I thought about Maplewood. I think it is a really good school and one you should be proud to attend. I know that you and your parents and carers agree with me. Many of you had a bad start to your education but when you joined Maplewood things turned around. After you've settled in, there is a tremendous improvement in your behaviour, which inspectors thought was outstanding.

Your teachers and the other staff work very hard and you told us how much you appreciate this. You said you enjoy school and attendance is high. Your parents told us how pleased they are with the school and all the improvements they had seen in your education. From low starting points, you make good progress in learning particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school is always trying to get better and the new building will provide you with even more opportunities to thrive. I have tried to help by identifying two things that could be improved. They are:

- give you more chances to learn independently, especially when writing
- produce a shorter and easy to understand plan for the future.

Maplewood provides you with firm foundations and I hope when you leave the school you will continue to work hard and enjoy learning. If you do, I am sure you will go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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