

Kilgarth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105130
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377180
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Eric Craven

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Simmons
Headteacher	Steven Baker
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2009
School address	Cavendish Street Birkenhead CH41 8BA
Telephone number	0151 6528071
Fax number	0151 6533427
Email address	schooloffice@kilgarth.wirral.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	12–13 January 2012
Inspection number	377180



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

Inspection team

Eric Craven

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In addition to eight lessons and five staff being observed, two series of lesson visits were conducted to check on the management of behaviour in classes and two tours of the school were made accompanied by students. Around four and a half hours was spent observing teaching and learning. Meetings were held with staff, a group of students, a member of the governing body, the community police officer, the school nurse, the school's educational psychologist, home-school attendance officer, parents and three former students. In addition, phone calls were made to two alternative vocational education providers and a parent governor. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, assessment and attendance data. The 19 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with those from staff and students.

Information about the school

Kilgarth School is a smaller-than-average-sized special school. It provides for boys, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Around 60% have a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Students come from all parts of the local authority, and all but a couple are transported to and from school. Almost all are of White British heritage. About one in ten is in the care of the local authority. At 69%, the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is larger than average. The school uses a number of off-site providers for vocational training. The headteacher took up post in September 2011 and the two assistant headteachers are also relatively recent appointments. The school has Investors in People, Quality Mark for Secondary Schools, Unicef Rights Respecting School award and the Bronze Eco School award.

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 pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Kilgarth is a good school. Staff apply the school's agreed systems for managing behaviour consistently and effectively. They tangibly care for and respect the students. These two attributes help students learn to manage their own behaviour and develop confidence. As a result they progressively focus their efforts on learning the longer they are at the school.
- Students' achievements are good, especially in their development of personal and social skills.
- The school works well with its partners to provide an attractive and worthwhile vocational strand to the curriculum. This is beginning to reap rewards in re-engaging some students who the school has found hard to reach in the past.
- Many of the students have weak literacy and numeracy skills. The school has increased its focus on these skills but recognises rightly that a more determined drive is needed to ensure all subjects reinforce these areas of learning.
- Attendance is on the rise, particularly over the current academic year, as a result of the school's good efforts to entice students to school and challenge those who do not respond positively.
- The quality of teaching is good aided by staff's increasing use of data. However, whereas lessons are planned well for groups of students there is insufficient emphasis on matching work precisely to the needs of individual students.
- The school provides a safe environment because of staff's high regard for students' security and well-being, a feature strongly endorsed by parents and carers.
- Senior staff and the governing body provide good leadership and management. They have developed a close-knit team of staff who are all pulling in the same direction.
- The school's self-evaluation is being helped by an improved use of data. However, this tends to be focused on individual students. Opportunities are lost to use data at a whole-school level to analyse data for trends and patterns and to inform school improvement planning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Drive forward quickly with the plans to fully establish the concerted and consistent teaching of literacy and numeracy in all subjects.

- Improve teachers' planning further so that work is set more closely to the needs and abilities of individual students based on their prior attainment and current progress.
- Make better use of data at a whole-school level to:
 - inform senior leaders and the governing body about patterns and trends in the outcomes achieved by students and the in quality of teaching
 - set targets in the school improvement plan and to measure the school's success.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The educational histories of the students are very often chequered. They are depicted by disruptive behaviour, exclusions, poor attendance and eroded self-esteem. As a consequence, their attainment is most often below that of students of a similar age nationally when they arrive at the school. However, when they leave many are a good deal nearer the national average.

It often takes students a while to settle and rise to the school's expectations of behaviour but once they do their rates of progress accelerate. They learn to stay focused in lessons. They work effectively with others and develop important attributes such as resilience and perseverance. These achievements are because staff give them a consistent and predictable response when they misbehave and, as a result, they learn to modify their behaviour. They develop trusting relationships with staff who know them well and are effective in ensuring their social and emotional, as well as their academic needs, are met.

Students themselves say they learn a lot and parents and carers agree, with 95% of those who returned the questionnaire affirming their children make good progress. The parent of an ex-student wrote '[name] went on to achieve what we thought would be impossible. He passed his exams and received awards from the school for his achievement.' There were a couple of parents who had reservations about the progress being made in developing communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection did find that although the school has taken steps forward in teaching literacy, there is not always sufficient focus on developing the literacy and numeracy skills many students lack when they arrive at the school. Students make better progress in mathematics than in English, where their attainment is generally lower, shown not least by their modest reading ages.

Because staff are using information better to check on progress, the under-achievement of individuals is identified quickly and effective interventions put in place. The progress of students who are in the care of the local authority is on a par with that of others. Attendance is improving and makes a positive contribution to students achieving more. Students made good progress in most of the lessons observed and it was never less than satisfactory. In 2011, most students achieved the challenging targets the school had set them and improvements seen in GCSE results over the previous two years continued. Encouragingly, the achievements of students the school finds most disaffected also improved and they achieved their targets for 5+A* to G GCSE and equivalent awards.

Quality of teaching

All of the parents and carers returning the questionnaire feel their children are taught well and nearly 90% of students reported that teaching is good. This is a view endorsed by the inspector.

Teachers' regular assessments of students are checked with colleagues to ensure they are accurate and these data increasingly help teachers to plan effectively for groups of students. However, work for individual students that is targeted at their precise needs is infrequently evident in teachers' planning. Information and communication technology is used consistently well by teachers and students in lessons. This adds interest by helping teachers draw on revealing explanations. Other characteristics of the better teaching are questioning that checks on students' understanding, and pace and vibrancy in lessons with well judged changes of activity planned to sustain students' interest. Staff's good subject knowledge helps them to plan activities that are of interest to students as a rule. Indeed, in a personal, social and health education lesson students were engrossed and learned well about the consequences of using drugs because of the teacher's knowledge of criminal law; this enhanced their understanding of right and wrong. Well selected activities such as this help engender students' curiosity in learning. Behaviour and learning targets are used to help students appreciate what is expected of them and many know their own targets and appreciate the progress they are making. However, in some cases, marking is not used effectively to explain to students what it is they need to do to improve further.

In lessons that are motivating and vibrant, students show their interest by asking questions. They are willing to work together and show they can persevere with an activity. In lessons not as good as this, students do sometimes get frustrated and are less willing to maintain their effort. Nevertheless, in all lessons observed the relationships between staff and students were never less than satisfactory and in most cases they were good. The 'flexi' curriculum, which is tailored to individual needs, has proven to be a catalyst in engaging some of the hardest-to-reach students and helping them achieve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students improve their behaviour markedly once they settle into the school's routines and respond positively to staff's expectations. The meticulous application by staff of agreed systems is married with a supportive and caring ethos. To illustrate this, an ex-student described how he feels the school helped him take control of his behaviour difficulties, 'It's made me a better person and I respect people now.'

Staff draw on the help of other agencies extremely well in supporting students and their families. For example, during the inspection, the community police officer made a valuable contribution in helping a young person appreciate that his response to a situation was wholly unacceptable. The school nurse, educational psychologist and home/school attendance officer all make a positive difference and are embedded well into the work of the school.

Of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire, 95% said there is a good standard of behaviour. Three-quarters of the students completing the questionnaire feel that behaviour is good and almost all feel that any bullying is dealt with well by the school. Students report they feel safe in school. The inspector supports these views of what behaviour is typically like. The school's systems for managing disruptive behaviour are very

effective and when a student does need to leave a lesson this is done with minimal fuss and seldom affects the learning of others. They are returned swiftly to lessons once they re-compose themselves so that their learning is maximised. The students interviewed talk of staff's fairness and willingness to listen in dealing with challenging behaviour. The use of fixed-term exclusions over time is diminishing and the majority of incidents that require this sanction are to do with students in Year 7 who take a while to settle at the school.

Leadership and management

The curriculum is good and serves students well. Most find the range of activities motivating. Staff monitor the effectiveness of the vocational education providers and good support is given to students on these placements. Visits and visitors enhance students' appreciation of the community beyond the school and their appreciation of other cultures. Students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good because they learn to behave and socialise well and their curiosity in learning is enlivened.

Staff have full regard for the safety of students. Checks on the suitability of staff for employment are robust and risk assessments and site security receive due attention. Returned questionnaires from parents and carers show they are unanimous in saying their children feel safe at this school and are well looked after. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Staff are very vigilant to ensure no student misses out and is not subject to discrimination.

The school's work with parents is very good and unanimously the returned questionnaires say that the school helps parents and carers support their own children's learning and keeps them well informed. Effective use is made of the views of parents, carers and students in reviewing the school's work and forming strategic plans.

The depth and breadth of experience of the governing body serves the school well. Governors do not shy away from asking probing questions that hold senior staff to account. They are informed about the school's work through frequent communication with the headteacher and briefings from staff. Nonetheless, governors could be better informed about the rates of progress students are making and trends in behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching. Testimony to the success of the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body in developing a cohesive and buoyant staff team is an impressive statement of allegiance from staff. Everyone who returned the questionnaire said they feel proud to be a member of staff and know what the school is trying to achieve.

There are good examples of improvement at this school since its last inspection. Attainment is on the rise as a consequence of students' increased rates of progress. Improved use of assessments by teachers and the 'flexi' curriculum meeting students' needs are two of the significant reasons why this is the case. The school has successfully tackled the areas for improvement from its last inspection. Senior leaders evaluate the school's work effectively although they rightly recognise that more rigour is needed in the monitoring of teaching to help senior staff and governors know how well it is improving or otherwise. The school has been successful in using continuing professional development for staff to further their knowledge and skills in teaching and the management of behaviour. Senior staff and governors have an accurate appreciation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school, for example, has identified rightly that students' literacy skills need to be enhanced and is implementing plans to have all lessons include a focus on literacy. The track record of success shows that the school 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 pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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 pupils. 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 pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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 pupils 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 pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' 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.



16 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Kilgarth School, Birkenhead, CH41 8BA

Thank you for your welcome when I inspected your school recently. I am grateful to those students with whom I held discussions and those who showed me around the school.

I have judged that yours is a good school. This is because it helps you get back on track with your learning. The way staff help you understand what is acceptable and what is not, is good. They care for you well and show you respect. Overall, your behaviour is good, something you and your parents say as well. I was pleased to read in your questionnaire returns so many of you saying that you learn a lot in lessons. This is because the quality of teaching you receive is good and the things you are taught are interesting and meaningful. The progress you make at the school is good and I can see why the school's GCSE results are improving.

The school keeps you safe and you yourselves say that the rare cases of bullying are tackled well by staff. I am pleased that attendance is improving. It is simple but true that you cannot learn if you do not attend. Please play your full part by attending school or your placements every day. The headteacher, senior staff and governors are leading and managing the school well and all staff are pulling in the same direction.

To make the school even better I have asked staff to plan to teach literacy and numeracy in all subjects, not just English and mathematics. I have also asked them to set work for individual students when they form their lesson plans. Finally, I have asked them to check more on the data they have to see how much the school is improving.

Each of you has my good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.