

Springwell Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135275
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	381860
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2012
Lead inspector	Saleem Hussain

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Sanderson
Headteacher	Josie Thirkell
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain
Freda Jackson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons and saw all teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), but no parents had accessed it, observed the school's work, and looked at a broad range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation, development planning and detailed assessment information for pupils' progress and behaviour. Inspectors scrutinised the views of staff and pupils and analysed 34 questionnaires from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Springwell opened originally in January 2008. The school moved to new accommodation in June 2011. All pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Around one third has autistic spectrum disorder and one third has attention deficit, hyper activity or other similar conditions. The severity and complexity of pupils' learning difficulties have increased since the time of the last inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Before joining the school, pupils' education has typically been disrupted by low levels of attendance or exclusion from previous schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. All pupils are White British and there are only a few girls on roll. A very small number is in the care of the local authority. A pupil referral unit, sixth-form provision and associated services share the school's site and building. Springwell's headteacher leads these provisions also, but they are inspected separately. The school has two nationally recognised awards from the Disabilities Film Society in recognition of its work in relation to media studies.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. All groups of pupils, including those with different special educational needs and disabilities, boys, girls, and pupils in care are achieving extremely well overall. Leaders and managers at all levels have created an excellent ethos for learning. Very effective strategies are in place to ensure that teaching is of the highest order and pupils get the most out of a very rich curriculum, which provides equally well for their academic and personal development needs.
- Teachers and support staff take full advantage of the excellent accommodation to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. The teamwork between staff to support learning is exceptional. Comments from pupils include ‘adults make learning fun, they know us very well and help us when we get stuck’.
- Inclusion lies at the heart of the school’s work. Strategies to raise pupils’ self-confidence and to promote excellent behaviour are very effective. Consequently, pupils learn and understand the impact of their actions on others and make rapid improvements in their behaviour from the time they start at the school. The result of these factors is a very orderly, calm and safe atmosphere, where pupils behave exceptionally well. Although parents and carers hold very positive views about the school and value the quality of education highly, a small number are uncertain about whether lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have created a common sense of purpose where only the best is good enough for pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate, penetrating and insightful. The inspirational headteacher works closely and very effectively with the governing body and senior managers to monitor the quality of provision and ensure that any underachievement is remedied very quickly. The school has improved very well since the last inspection. For example, the curriculum is more creative and offers more opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications by the time they leave. Outcomes, including pupils’ achievements

and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, have improved from good to outstanding overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that parents and carers are better informed about standards of behaviour in school and in lessons by providing more information in newsletters.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents are very pleased with their children's achievements. Almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in most subjects and in each key stage of their learning. Overall, pupils achieve extremely well, including in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and computer skills development. Communication, language and independence skills development are always a very strong focus in learning and so pupils make very good progress in these areas. Communication aids are used very effectively with autistic pupils to ensure that they can understand and be understood fully. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Nearly all leavers at the end of the last school year left with a good number and range of qualifications. All of last year's leavers moved on to further education. Different groups of pupils make excellent progress in lessons, including those with different special educational needs and those with disabilities, girls, and pupils in care. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding very quickly and in depth. This is because teachers present the work in a way that appeals to pupils and they explain difficult learning points very carefully. Attainment is below average, but achievement is outstanding because of the excellent progress pupils make over time from low starting points. The school is narrowing the gap with national averages very effectively for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

Pupils' attainment in reading as they prepare to leave school is judged by inspectors as being below average, but of a high standard in view of their special educational needs. Opportunities are taken very well across the curriculum to develop reading skills. For example, pupils were asked to read textbook questions aloud in a mathematics lesson and this not only improved their reading, but also raised their self-confidence very considerably. In a whole-school assembly, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was highly evident during singing as they recited the lyrics of popular songs from the very large text projected onto a wall. The singing was full of energy and feeling.

Quality of teaching

A very high proportion of teaching is outstanding and never less than consistently good. Consequently, almost all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress across the curriculum. Teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. Along with other adults, they develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning very effectively by providing many practical learning activities in which pupils can use as many of

their senses to learn as possible. For example, music and film are often used to very good effect. The school has a wealth of assessment information, which is used very effectively to set very challenging targets for different groups of pupils. Lesson planning is very detailed. Opportunities for pupils to self-evaluate are excellent and this helps them to develop a very strong awareness of their own learning.

Teachers know pupils' academic and special educational needs very well. The pace of work in lessons is always at least good and this helps pupils get through much work. The teaching of reading, writing, communication skills and mathematics is highly effective. Teachers use very imaginative teaching strategies. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher used learning resources very effectively as pupils made floating lanterns from tea bags and learnt about convection currents. Pupils gasped in amazement as they lit their lanterns and observed how they rose to the ceiling, powered by convection. This illustrated pupils' spiritual development very well also. Support assistants make an extremely strong contribution to lessons and work very closely with teachers in ensuring that each pupil gets individual attention whenever needed. These interventions are very successful in ensuring that individuals achieve as well as they can. All parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire were pleased with the quality of teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a very orderly community. Pupils are welcomed by staff upon arrival each morning and enthusiastically go to their classrooms, very eager to start their school day. They show very high levels of engagement, courtesy and cooperation, in and out of lessons. They have excellent, enthusiastic attitudes to learning, enabling lessons to proceed without interruption. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and at other times. This is because staff manage behaviour very effectively and have developed excellent strategies to ensure that pupils fully understand the impact of their actions on others. For example, in lessons, individuals were seen very quickly reflecting on how their behaviour might affect the learning of others and with remarkable resolve and determination, regained composure and returned to task. Incidents of bad behaviour are rare. Improvements in behaviour over time are remarkable and the number of incidents of misbehaviour has reduced markedly year on year. Staff use praise and reward for excellent conduct very effectively and pupils say they like the certificates, treats and prizes very much. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is very effective and there are excellent relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils. All these factors ensure that all pupils learn and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and dignity. The vast majority of parents, carers, staff and pupils are very positive about behaviour and safety. However, a few parental questionnaire returns showed uncertainty about standards of behaviour and, therefore, there is a need for the school to inform parents and carers better about this.

Instances of bullying, of any kind, are extremely rare. Pupils discuss bullying of different types frequently in PSHCE lessons and at other times. They have done much writing and poster design surrounding bullying. Consequently, they have a very clear understanding of the many forms of bullying including, for example, cyber-bullying and that related to prejudice based on special educational needs and

disabilities. Pupils know what to do if they feel bullied and it is also evident that they actively try to prevent bullying from occurring.

All groups of pupils feel safe at school at all times. They have developed an excellent understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation. Pupils move around the premises with very good consideration for others and use space and learning resources very sensibly and safely. Inspectors saw many examples of pupils making exceptional contributions to their safe and very positive learning environment. During snack time for a nurture group of pupils, they were seen to make hot drinks, toast and crumpets safely. Equipment in physical education and other practical lessons was also seen to be used very carefully. Adult supervision and support is always very effective with staff ensuring that adequate precautions are always taken.

Attendance is above average for this type of school. The vast majority of pupils show rapid and sustained improvement over time. Attendance has increased year on year and the attendance of a very high proportion of pupils is well-above average. Punctuality is good, including movement from one lesson to another.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels pursue excellence with energy and passion. This has resulted in a sense of common purpose across the school. The school has an excellent capacity for improvement. Weaknesses in the school's work are tackled systematically. The school has remedied the two areas for improvement since the last inspection very effectively. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance has much involvement from leaders at all levels now and pupils' progress in mathematics is also much improved. Inspectors are very impressed at the improvements made to teaching, which have resulted in outstanding achievement.

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching frequently. Any training needs identified are provided for very effectively. Staff say that they are very pleased with the wide range of training opportunities, which help them to develop their skills, subject knowledge and ability to manage and fully support pupils in their learning. Improvements in teaching since the last inspection are a key factor in the excellent progress all groups of pupils now make. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, base their actions on a very clear understanding of the school's performance and of staff and pupils' needs. Members of the governing body possess a broad range of expertise in educational matters. Along with other senior leaders they deserve much credit for the design and suitability of the excellent, fit for purpose accommodation.

The school promotes equality of opportunity outstandingly well. The school's curriculum provides a sparkling array of memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high-quality learning. All pupils enjoy equality of access to the excellent curriculum. These factors contribute very well to pupils' achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, there are many opportunities for pupils to learn about taking responsibility for their own behaviour and how to stay safe and to develop their basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills. They take full advantage of the many opportunities in the curriculum for personal development. For example, inspectors observed an after-

school Film Club debate, in which all pupils discussed the moral issues about the care of orphans, in a very balanced, mature fashion. The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers. There are many focus groups and workshops held in school. These are very effective in helping parents and carers to find out more about their children's special educational needs and how they can be best involved in their children's learning. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

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.



18 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springwell Community Special School, Barnsley S71 2AY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed it very much. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your outstanding school.

You are happy because you feel very safe and behaviour is outstanding. I can see that you enjoy learning because teaching is outstanding and you can get lots of certificates for your work by the time you leave school. Excellent school leaders make sure that there are many interesting things for you to do and that you achieve as well as possible.

To make the school even better, I have asked leaders to provide even more information to your parents and carers about your superb behaviour in school. You can help the school by carrying on doing your best and behaving so well. I know that everyone is very proud of the things you have achieved in school. Well done.

Yours sincerely,

Saleem Hussain
Lead inspector

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