

Hare Law School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114340
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378844
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	Marian Thomas

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Meredith
Headteacher	Maggie Collins
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Catchgate Annfield Plain Stanley DH9 8DT
Telephone number	01207 234547
Fax number	01207 234922
Email address	m.collins100@durhamlearning.net



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Introduction

Inspection team

Marian Thomas
Sally Hicks

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 teachers in 14 lessons and parts of lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the representatives of the governing body, and school staff including senior managers. The inspection team took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development-planning, examples of pupils' work, and health and safety documentation. The inspector also took into account the views of 43 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

Information about the school

Hare Law school is an average size special school which primarily makes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have more severe or complex difficulties, including a growing number who exhibits challenging behaviour. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Currently, there are significantly more boys than girls and very few pupils under the age of eight. Over the past seven years only one pupil has been admitted into the Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All pupils are of White British origin and currently three are in the care of the local authority. A much higher proportion than average of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals.

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

- Hare Law school is a good school which has made significant improvement since the last inspection. It is not yet an outstanding school because higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they might, and classroom support and resources are not fully exploited in some lessons. Because staff meet the complex needs of pupils well, they make good progress academically. The caring ethos of the school, coupled with good provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enable pupils to make good gains in their personal development.
- The vast majority of pupils achieves well across the school. However, for a small group of higher-attaining pupils, progress is less good overall. This is because planning of activities in some lessons does not offer sufficient challenge to this group of pupils and results in slower progress.
- The majority of pupils know how to make safe choices and responds well to the consistent approach of all staff and the effective reward system. This results in an improvement in their behaviour and a harmonious environment. This is evidenced by the continuing reduction in recorded incidents of difficult behaviour.
- Overall good teaching is based on staff’s accurate understanding of the curriculum and effective use of assessment information to plan lessons. However, in a small number of lessons the organisation of teaching resources is less good and teaching assistants are not used as effectively as they could be to support learning.
- The school is a cohesive community where all are valued. Since the last inspection leadership and management have continued to improve and have been successful in moving the school forward. Parents and carers are overall very pleased with the provision made for their children. The effective leadership of teaching and management of staff performance are key to their success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of higher-attaining pupils by ensuring that planned activities within lessons meet the specific needs of this group of pupils.
- Improve the consistency of teaching to that of the best by ensuring that in a small number of lessons classroom resources and teaching assistants' time is used effectively in order to maximise support for pupils' learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The majority of pupils who join the school are working at levels much lower than those expected for their age. This is due to their complex learning needs. Added to this, a large majority has additional needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Within the supportive environment of the school, barriers to learning are minimised and all groups make equally good progress. Whilst attainment for the majority of pupils remains lower than average, their considerable progress towards a wide range of accreditation represents good achievement overall. The majority of pupils are successful in making good and often accelerated progress in English and mathematics due to highly individualised programmes of work. However, progress for a small number of higher-attaining pupils, is less good. As a result of the high expectations of staff, pupils show good attitudes to learning and respond well to the targeted intervention programmes that support their good progress in English and mathematics. For example, in one mathematics lesson pupils with a wide range of abilities and additional autistic spectrum needs were all set the task of identifying number patterns. The work was exceptionally well-tailored to meet the needs of individuals. An exciting outdoor activity engaged all pupils at the start of the lesson and promoted their thinking skills well. A well-planned and industrious middle section conducted within the classroom, enabled pupils to work on four different related activities tailored at individual levels which ensured that they all made good progress, as evidenced by the lively recap of learning at the end of the lesson.

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers that their children are making good progress. The diverse curriculum offers a good level of personal challenge to pupils, who, often after an unsettled start, go on to develop good levels of spiritual, moral and social development. As a result the majority makes a successful transfer to further education and the world of work as evidenced by the very small minority which is not in education or employment when they leave school.

Quality of teaching

Overall teaching is good. The majority of teachers plan lessons conscientiously and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, there are some inconsistencies. In a small number of lessons, teachers fail to plan for and prepare teaching resources sufficiently well, particularly teaching assistants' time. As a result, teaching assistants are left to lead groups with insufficient knowledge of what is expected and this reduces the effectiveness of their support. Consequently, pupils do not access activities sufficiently well and learning and achievement slows. In addition, there are occasions when the tasks set for higher-attaining

pupils are insufficiently challenging. Good teaching could clearly be seen in a very well-organised lesson where assessment of pupils' needs was effectively undertaken. The lesson had as its focus global citizenship. Key Stage 4 pupils with a range of abilities were asked for their opinions on a range of issues relating to global inequalities including child slave labour. Pupils engaged in an animated discussion on all aspects of the relevant issues, prompted only by the teacher's astute questioning and simple 'agree' and 'disagree' voting cards. The obvious enjoyment with which pupils eagerly voiced their opinions was evidence of the quality of the learning experience and their exceptional achievement. This also made a strong contribution to furthering pupils' understanding of other communities which contributed well to pupils' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Reading and mathematical activities are appropriately planned. Much effort is made to develop pupils' communication skills at all levels including through partnerships with health care professionals. The curriculum is highly personalised to meet the needs of learners. A wide variety of enrichment activities is offered help to develop pupils' independence skills and their confidence. For example, a group of pupils recently completed a bike ride across England from coast to coast. One pupil encapsulated the views of the group in his comment: 'It was very hard and I didn't think I would make it, but I did and it was brilliant'. The majority of teachers plan lessons conscientiously and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The majority of classrooms are organised well with displays of pupils' work making an effective contribution to learning. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed with the inspection findings and felt that teaching was good. A comment made by one sums up the views of the majority: 'This school is just brilliant. My child is happy at last.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The inspectors found the behaviour of pupils to be typically good, despite their high levels of behavioural and emotional needs, with few interruptions to learning in lessons. This concurred with the views of parents, carers and pupils who say behaviour is good for the majority of the time. Pupils say they feel safe and parents and carers agree. Pupils also say they are well aware of what to do if they encounter difficulties with others and are clear about what action to take. Whilst they say different types of bullying very occasionally occur, pupils are confident that staff, once notified, deal with it effectively. The majority take a very tolerant approach to the needs of others. This reduces the impact of interruptions to learning in the classroom and is clear evidence of pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Due to the success of the behaviour policy there has been a reduction in exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils' attendance is good. Currently, pupils' attendance is higher than the average for a mainstream secondary school, and has continued to rise year on year, particularly in Key Stage 4. This, pupils told inspectors, is because they enjoy attending school so much.

Leadership and management

The skilful leadership of the headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has moved the school forward considerably since the last inspection, as evidenced by the significant improvement in overall attendance. Systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have been improved and pupils' overall achievement has been raised. Because of senior leaders' clear vision and appropriate plans, staff are clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. A continuous and well-planned programme of professional development for all staff has improved outcomes for pupils. As a result, the school has good

capacity to improve further. The school is a highly inclusive community in which each individual is valued. Effective systems which promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are securely in place and, as a result, gaps in the performance of the majority of groups of pupils are eliminated

Risk assessments are undertaken regularly for a wide range of activities and are recorded effectively. Members of the governing body have good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, they offer a good level of support and challenge to senior leaders. The school leadership team, in partnership with the governing body, ensures that requirements for safeguarding are met and that policies and procedures are of a good standard. The school is successful at engaging parents and carers. They are kept well-informed about their children's progress and the majority is highly supportive of the work of the school.

The curriculum is well-matched to the needs of pupils. The introduction of a more creative approach has accelerated progress in literacy. Activities outside the classroom, including visits to places of worship for a range of different faiths, have contributed successfully to the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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.



19 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hare Law School, Stanley, DH9 8DT

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all. It was good to hear how much you value your school and how much you enjoy most of your lessons. We particularly want to thank everyone who gave time to talk to us. We agree with those of you who told us that you think your school is good. These are just some of the things we particularly enjoyed:

- the really friendly and polite welcome you give to visitors to make them feel at home
- the way in which staff care for you and help you to plan for your future
- the hard work you put into lessons which results in you making good progress.

We have asked your teachers to do these things to improve your school even more and we think you can help by continuing to work as hard as you can:

- organise your classrooms in such a way as to make it easier for you all to be successful learners
- ensure that the work teachers plan for you helps all of you to learn equally well and make as much progress as possible.

We want to wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Lead Inspector

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