

Green Fold School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105281
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	377216
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Austin 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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Collingborn
Executive headteacher	Jane Grecic
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Austin
Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed learning in 10 lessons taught by seven teachers. In addition, they conducted a series of short visits to activities and attended a special whole school event as well as an assembly. Meetings were held with pupils, the executive headteacher, the head Green Fold, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, assessment information, policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses in 28 parental questionnaires, 43 returned by staff and 28 completed by pupils. No responses had been made to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Information about the school

Green Fold is a small special school for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. About a third of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder: a number have sensory impairments and eight have complex medical needs. All have statements of special educational needs. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. There are twice as many boys as girls on roll. The majority of pupils are White British with others coming predominantly from Pakistani or Indian backgrounds. The proportion for whom English is an additional language is above average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.

Green Fold is part of The Orchards federation, along with a mainstream primary school and a mainstream nursery school. The federation is led by the executive headteacher and has a single governing body. The head Green Fold is responsible for the day to day management of the school. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are based at the upper school where they are collocated with the mainstream primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn with those from the other two schools in a purpose built, integrated provision on the lower site. There are children in both the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has gained the Leading Parent Partnership Award, the International School Award, the Eco School Award, the Artsmark and recognition as a Healthy School. The executive headteacher is a local leader in education.

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

- Green Fold is an outstanding school where inclusion is the watchword. The strong sense of moral purpose shared by staff permeates the work of the school as all strive to secure equality of opportunity for pupils. The excellent care for pupils, together with the rigorous monitoring of their progress, ensures that pupils’ individual needs are constantly in focus and consequently their achievement is outstanding.
- Pupils make exceptional progress because teaching is outstanding. The highly personalised approach to planning and assessment results in activities that match pupils’ learning and development needs very closely. Teachers and teaching assistants are adept at developing pupils’ communication skills and fostering their independence wherever possible. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage also make exceptional progress, learning alongside their peers in a stimulating and inclusive environment. The curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities that enrich pupils’ experiences and makes a very positive contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils’ behaviour is outstanding. The consistent implementation of the school’s behaviour system supports pupils’ learning and development very well, particularly for those whose behaviour is challenging. Staff know pupils very well and are highly skilled at diffusing potential difficulties. A wide range of partnerships with agencies enables the school to draw widely on additional expertise to support pupils where necessary.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The school has maintained this level of performance since its previous inspection, demonstrating an outstanding capacity to improve. The executive headteacher and the head Green Fold provide committed, resolute and expert leadership. Performance management is used to good effect to drive the school’s priorities forward. Rigorous quality assurance of teaching and learning leads to very well targeted professional development. Governance is outstanding, providing a high level of challenge to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Any areas for improvement are minor. The school has an excellent understanding of what it should do to improve and is already addressing these matters.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are positive about the progress their child is making and inspection evidence supports their view. Overall, achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils because learning in lessons, and through the whole range of activities, is very closely matched to the individual situation of each child. The rigorous assessment system ensures that the learning and development needs of every pupil are evaluated with great precision and, on this basis, challenging targets are set. The fine tuned steps in pupils' progress towards these are assessed on a daily basis and this forms the firm foundation for planning learning. Staff are highly skilled at recognising pupils' progress because they have an in depth knowledge of each child's abilities. This highly personalised approach secures outstanding progress from pupils' starting points. Due to their disabilities and special educational needs, pupils' attainment remains very low.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners who respond positively to well chosen stimuli. For instance, Key Stage 2 pupils thoroughly enjoyed riding and stroking an old fashioned rocking horse during a history lesson about traditional toys. When role-playing a story about a birthday, Key Stage 1 pupils were engaged by a series of presents, each of which had a different sensory appeal. In another Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils reacted positively to the sounds and colours of the sea, experienced through musical instruments and translucent fabrics.

The strong emphasis on the development of pupils' communication skills permeates all aspects of the school's work. Consistently effective use is made of songs which cue and support language linked to activities. A broad range of methods appropriate to pupils' needs is employed, with teaching assistants playing a vital role in encouraging and supporting communication. One parent reflects the school's success in the comment, 'I never thought I would be able to hear my son's speech.' The school draws well on the expertise of speech and language therapists to enhance skills in this area. Pupils' enjoyment of books is being encouraged successfully through one to one support for reading, a priority for the whole federation.

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is also outstanding. Here too detailed observations and careful recording inform assessment and planning highly effectively, so that children's learning is very well directed. Children make excellent progress towards their individual targets. Learning in fully inclusive classes, they make significant gains in their personal, social and communication skills, increasing in confidence as they play alongside their peer group. Children display sustained interest as they enjoy activities such as searching for hidden animal pictures and using large wheeled toys. Since the previous inspection varied and very well resourced outdoor provision has been developed, supporting children's physical development well.

Quality of teaching

Excellent relationships form the bedrock of teaching that is outstanding overall. The very well designed planning and assessment system ensures that teachers' lesson plans have a consistently sharp focus on the individual needs of each pupil. This whole school approach is equally effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage where similar strengths are evident. The support of all adults is carefully targeted and teaching assistants show high levels of skill in enabling pupils to engage in activities and make progress. This makes a substantial contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development as they are encouraged to listen to others, take turns, be proud of their work and celebrate others' success. For instance, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, a very good routine accompanied by a song enabled pupils happily to part with musical instruments at the end of a session. Adults model language well, maintaining a continuous emphasis on developing communication skills. Praise focused specifically on their individual areas for development, is used to great effect to boost pupils' self-esteem. Resources are carefully selected to foster learning, for instance, through a variety of sensory experiences, and reflecting pupils' preferences wherever possible. For example, in learning to subtract one, Key Stage 1 pupils enjoyed an interactive computer programme with touch technology that activated a crocodile. In the best lessons a crisp pace is maintained with smooth changes from one activity to another. On occasion, lessons are less well directed and the pace slows.

Inspection evidence supports the very positive view of teaching held by almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers who returned questionnaires are confident that the school keeps their child safe and that lessons are not disrupted. Inspectors agree and judge behaviour and the safety of pupils to be outstanding. The safety of pupils is paramount in the school and there are very thorough procedures to secure this. Staff are alert to risks and manage these very well. For instance, in the Early Years Foundation Stage careful supervision of some activities allows these to be available for all children without presenting a risk to those from Green Fold. Well considered and consistently implemented routines provide a secure daily framework to which pupils respond very well. This makes a considerable contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Staff are highly skilled at managing pupils whose behaviours can be challenging. A detailed knowledge of the needs of individuals enables staff to anticipate likely triggers and to recognise changes that require investigation. This reflects the depth of care the school exercises for all aspects of each pupil's needs. A comment by one parent is typical of a number received: 'the staff are really caring and have my child's best interests at heart.' Staff are well trained in the school's behaviour management approach which is implemented with a high degree of consistency, providing a secure environment for pupils. The school is adept at accessing the support of other agencies when this is required to meet pupils' wide ranging needs, including for those experiencing difficulties with behaviour or whose safety is of concern. With the exception of those pupils with complex medical needs, the attendance of pupils is broadly average for schools of this type.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher and the head Green Fold together articulate a clear and highly ambitious vision for the inclusive nature of the federation and the school's part in this.

Securing equality of opportunity is central to the school's philosophy and so the individual needs of each pupil are at the heart of its life. The senior leaders have worked hard and with great success to develop high quality, cohesive and coherent systems that support every aspect of the school's provision. The high degree of consistency with which these are applied enables leaders to keep a very close watch on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Consequently, leaders have an excellent grasp of the school's position which informs planning for improvement very well.

Leadership at all levels is outstanding, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Roles and responsibilities are clear, which is particularly important in the Early Years Foundation Stage where all three schools work very closely together. Responsibilities are successfully dispersed including to teaching assistants, who lead on areas such as physical development and the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The role of middle leaders, an area for development at the time of the previous inspection, is evolving well following staffing changes. The school's high expectations of the quality of teaching are supported by rigorous but proportionate monitoring of lessons and planning. Professional development is tailored to need, with an increasing use of coaching to share best practice.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body has developed robust systems for driving the strategic direction of the federation while maintaining oversight of, and high levels of challenge to, all three schools. Members of the governing body are well served by information from the school and triangulate this through their own monitoring activities. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and high quality.

The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning and in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An annual plan ensures that assemblies and whole school events focus on cultural and religious events, such as bonfire night and the festival of holi, to enrich pupils' experiences. During the inspection Key Stage 1 pupils enjoyed presenting their work on Mother's Day in assembly, watched appreciatively by their schoolmates. Pupils were very enthusiastic about the Irish ceilidh held during the inspection. Staff go to great lengths, including dressing up as leprechauns, to capture pupils' interest and make learning fun.

The school has a strong track record of partnership working. Multi agency partnerships draw on the wide range of expertise required to meet the complex needs of some pupils and support their families. Educational partnerships share the school's excellent inclusive practice as well as strengthening its own work, for instance on assessment. The school works very closely with parents and carers, communicating daily using a variety of media best suited to individual families. Several parents and carers commented positively on the school's daily contact and open door policy. A recently formed parents' group is growing fast and setting a pertinent agenda. During the inspection, parents and carers evidently valued the opportunity to question therapists and gain a broader perspective on how their work benefits children.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Green Fold School, Bolton, BL4 0RA

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We are pleased to say that you attend an outstanding school. Here are some of the excellent things we found:

- all the staff know you very well and take great care of you
- your teachers plan activities very carefully so that each of you learns as well as possible
- you are enthusiastic about learning
- your lessons include lots of songs to help develop your communication skills
- all the adults help you to behave very well
- the school organises lots of exciting events such as the Irish ceilidh for St Patrick's day
- the children in Nursery and Reception have super indoor and outdoor spaces and lots of toys to help them learn so they make outstanding progress
- lots of people such as the speech and language therapists come to school regularly to help you do as well as possible
- the staff make sure your parents and carers know how you are and how well you are doing
- the school has the right plans to keep up its excellent work.

With good wishes for your continued outstanding progress.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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