

Great Arley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119878
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358638
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Condron
Headteacher	Mr Paul McSeveny
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed and seven different teachers seen. Meetings were held with senior staff and representatives of the school council. Informal discussions were held with individual pupils and many other staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, school improvement planning and evidence relating to the monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work. Examples of pupils' writing were scrutinised. Forty-three questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with 43 from pupils and several from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The balance maintained between promoting new learning and reinforcing past learning.
- The contribution to outcomes of additional interventions for small groups of pupils with additional needs.
- The extent to which pupils take personal responsibility for their learning and behaviour.
- The extent to which provision for Early Years Foundation Stage children is appropriate to their needs.

Information about the school

This is an average sized school for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. In recent years the pupil profile has changed. In the past, most pupils exhibited moderate learning difficulties but many more pupils with more severe and complex difficulties are now being admitted. Over a third of all pupils have autistic spectrum conditions, often associated with additional speech, language and communication needs. The large majority of pupils is of secondary school age. Boys outnumber girls by about 3 to 1. About a third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

This year, two children of reception age were admitted to the school. Neither was present during the inspection.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is well respected within the local authority and its work is much appreciated by parents and carers, many of whom submitted glowing testimonials to the inspection team. Pupils enjoy attending and say they feel safe in school. They achieve well because they are well taught and are keen to learn.

Good leadership and management ensure that provision is constantly being adapted and improved to reflect the changing needs of pupils. This has been especially effective in meeting the needs of pupils with autism. Adaptations to the curriculum for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are less well developed.

The school has a good track record of improvement. Areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Writing has improved and so has the range of accredited courses for the more-able pupils. Many staff are engaged in high-quality training to improve specific aspects of expertise in teaching, care and leadership and management. Self-evaluation is accurate and leadership and management duties are well-distributed. As such the school demonstrates a good capacity for improvement, though this could be improved further by the inclusion of more precise timescales for improvement in the school development plan.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Serious incidents are very rare and the school operates as a very harmonious community. Pupils respond exceptionally well to staff exhortations which encourage them to work as independently as possible and to assume responsibility for their learning and actions. The quality of care, guidance and support available to pupils is outstanding, with particularly well-developed arrangements in place to help pupils at times of transition from one key stage to another and when they leave the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the curriculum for pupils in the Early Years Foundation stage reflects national guidance more closely by improving access to outdoor learning opportunities and providing more access to activities where pupils can learn through play and exploration.
- Speed up improvement by the addition of tighter timescales and clearer definition of success criteria, linked to expected outcomes, in the school development plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and they work hard in lessons. Most pupils show great pride in their achievements and enjoy their learning. They listen

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attentively to instructions and try hard to follow them with as little additional support as possible. In this way, they show a good sense of responsibility and initiative. Pupils take care in the presentation of their work and behave exceptionally well. During the inspection, no lessons were disrupted by errant behaviour and pupils interacted very productively, often helping one another with their tasks.

The nature of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities means that attainment on entry is nearly always very low and that attainment is unlikely ever to rise above low for the large majority of pupils. Most of the qualifications gained by last year's leavers reflected attainment at about Level 2 of the National Curriculum, but with a few higher-attaining pupils gaining accreditation at the equivalent of the lower grades of GCSE and frequently higher in science. There is very little difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Those with the greatest communication difficulties get good, carefully targeted additional support in small intervention groups or on an individual basis and this helps them to achieve equally alongside other pupils.

Pupils are keen to live healthily. Boys and girls participate equally enthusiastically in physical exercise in lessons and at playtimes. They enjoy the healthy eating choices made available through the excellent quality of the midday meals. The school council is well-established and has been instrumental in contributing to improvements to playground equipment and changes to the school uniform.

There is very little absence. Occasionally, pupils are unable to attend for health reasons linked to their special educational needs and/or disabilities but even so, attendance is above the national average.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are very sensitive to pupils' individual needs. They use accurate assessment information well to ensure that the work pupils are set is suitably challenging. At the start of each lesson care is taken to check what pupils have remembered from past learning. This helps to avoid unnecessary repetition, while allowing for additional reinforcement if it is discovered that pupils have forgotten some of the things that may prevent them from learning effectively in the ensuing lesson. Short sessions at the end of each lesson involve pupils well in ascertaining what they have learned and give encouragement and praise. In most instances, classroom assistants are well-briefed and deployed carefully to help individuals and small groups of pupils. Independence is strongly promoted, such as in a science lesson where a group of three higher-attaining Year 7 pupils were left alone to support one another in performing simple experiments. Similarly in another science lesson, after a comprehensive explanation of expectations, the teacher told a group of Year 11 pupils 'Right, I'm going to let you get on with it'; they did, and they enjoyed finding out about how chocolate changes in texture when it is heated. Very occasionally, teaching is weakened slightly when the pace of learning is not varied sufficiently to create impact or when teachers tend to teach for too long and do not leave enough time for pupils to work on their own.

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Good progress has been made in introducing more challenging accredited courses for higher-attaining pupils. In recognition of the fact that the number of these pupils is diminishing, while the number of lower attaining pupils is rising, the school is now focusing closely and effectively on accreditation opportunities for lower attainers. There has been successful development of a timetable which helps pupils to identify the links between different subjects and apply what they learn in one lesson to other situations. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are given good opportunities to gain experience of the workplace and all Key Stage 4 pupils spend at least half a day each week in college. The curriculum is carefully tailored to individual needs, for instance by the successful inclusion of individual and small group work to promote communication skills. There is a very high take-up of a wide range of much-enjoyed enrichment activities. Pupils have enjoyed particular success in music, where their public performances have been exceptionally well received and appreciated.

The school ethos is highly positive and supportive. This enables all pupils to participate fully in the life of the school and benefit from what it has to offer. Staff have an intricate understanding of individual needs and pupils' backgrounds. Support is highly appreciated by parents and carers. The school works closely with a wide range of professionals and agencies involved in the social and medical care of pupils. Key Stage 4 pupils are particularly well prepared for transferring to college or training settings or to other schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management duties are widely-distributed and well-implemented. This is a happy school, with all staff strongly committed to improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is well-developed. Teaching is good and improving. Target setting is realistic and challenging, helped by a very thorough system of moderation which involves other similar schools and the local authority. As a result, outcomes are good. Formal planning for school improvement is weakened by not being accompanied by clear timescales and occasionally not stating sufficiently precise success criteria against which the pace of improvement can be judged. The governing body has recognised the need for it to become more involved in finding out for itself what goes on in school on a day-to-day basis and has introduced good systems whereby they visit with increasing regularity and listen to presentations by subject leaders. These new initiatives are helping to add rigour to the way it holds senior managers to account alongside supporting the school successfully. The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that they can contribute effectively to the care and education of their children. A good range of partnership activities has been developed. These are particularly effective in

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preparing pupils for leaving school and entering adult life but they are also instrumental in expanding and improving the curriculum, for instance by capitalising on the expertise of outside specialists such as a professional musician to add to the expertise of existing staff. Equal opportunities are promoted well. There is no evidence of discrimination and no major differences in the performance and participation of different groups of pupils. Safeguarding procedures are good. Care is taken to assess potential risk in activities such as science, cooking and educational visits. Safeguarding training is of good quality and extends to all staff. Pupils are helped to recognise the potential risks inherent in some of the situations they are likely to find themselves in, such as when travelling independently. The school recognises that it serves a predominantly White British community of pupils. Extensive work has been done to help pupils to gain a broader view of society through a good programme of multicultural education. The promotion of cohesion within the broader community is planned less well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

This is the first school year in which the school has admitted children into the Early Years Foundation Stage. As numbers are so small, these children are taught in a class of primary-age pupils. As neither child was present during the inspection it was not possible to observe first-hand how teaching is adapted to meet their needs, but planning shows a suitable focus on giving them increased opportunities to learn through play and experimentation. Attainment on entry is very low. Records show that progress towards individual targets is at least satisfactory and occasionally good. The classroom environment has been adapted to provide separate areas for role-play activities and for experimenting with sand and water. The outdoor area is insufficiently developed and is remote from the classroom. This limits its successful use and detracts from the curriculum. The same high quality of care, guidance and support evident in the rest of the school

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applies to the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is too early to judge the sustainability of leadership and management systems, but staff are suitably trained and there are good links with parents, carers and outside agencies. There is also suitable access to the expertise of staff in other schools who have more experience of teaching Early Years Foundation Stage children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers express mainly positive views of the school. The response to a questionnaire sent out before the inspection was good. Although virtually all parents and carers report that the school keeps them well-informed about their children's progress, a very small minority commented that they would appreciate even more information, especially when their children have limited ability to communicate for themselves. While inspectors feel that communication with parents and carers is good, they raised the issue with senior staff and were reassured that the school will tackle this situation. Issues relating to individual needs not being met related mainly to the provision of speech therapy. Inspectors recognise that the amount of therapy available to the school is limited but that it is well directed towards the pupils who need it most.

Inspectors agree with the overwhelmingly positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Arley School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	67	13	30	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	79	8	19	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	67	11	26	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	58	12	28	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	65	12	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	60	12	28	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	60	16	37	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	60	14	33	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	74	5	12	4	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	60	14	33	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	58	14	33	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	72	8	19	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	72	10	23	1	2	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Arley School, Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5 4HH

It was a pleasure to visit your school recently. Thank you for making our visit so enjoyable. We thought your behaviour was wonderful and loved the way you made us feel so welcome. We both enjoyed talking to you and were gladdened to hear about how much you enjoy school and feel safe.

We judged Great Arley to be a good school because you are taught well and make good progress. We also made note of the excellent ways in which you are cared for guided and supported and how well-led and managed the school is. We thought your timetable was good and included lots of interesting and enjoyable activities. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed playing in the band and performing in competitions. It was good to see you putting so much effort into your work and play.

We have made two recommendations as to how we feel your school could be even better. We want more consideration to be given to provision for those very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and we want senior managers to make it clearer how quickly they expect planned improvements to be achieved.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alastair Younger

Lead Inspector

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