

Cavendish School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111497
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	356924
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Linda Clare

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	9–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Howard
Headteacher	Mrs Celia Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2008
School address	Lincoln Close Runcorn Cheshire WA7 4YX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed. Nine teachers and two associate teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including information on students' progress, teachers' planning, curricular documents, students' files and the school's self-evaluation. Questionnaires were received from 34 parents and carers and the inspectors also read survey responses from the school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching has been improved.
- How well the curriculum effectively meets the needs of different groups.
- How accurately the school monitors and evaluates its progress.
- The extent to which the school has maintained excellent outcomes and provision in post-16 education.

Information about the school

Cavendish High School is a smaller than average school that provides education for students who have severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple needs (PMLD) and for those with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The school serves Halton and the surrounding area. All students have a statement of special educational needs and boys outnumber girls by two to one. Most students are of White British origin; much smaller numbers are from other ethnic backgrounds. Three students speak English as an additional language. There is a small number of looked after students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average.

The school was subject to re-designation from all-age (2-19) to secondary phase provision (11-19) in 2009 which immediately increased the proportions of students with PMLD and ASD. A small number of primary-age students remain in the school. The school has achieved several awards including Artsmark Gold, Healthy School status and the Sportsmark. Cavendish High was awarded specialist school status in September 2010 for Cognition and Learning.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Cavendish High is an outstanding school. The 'dream catcher' logo engraved into its windows reminds students of their hopes and aspirations every day. These provide a background to the rich, creative and progressive experiences of a school in which students flourish. Students say they enjoy their lessons and feel very safe in the school's warm and supportive environment. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise, with representative comments describing 'progress beyond our expectations', 'amazing improvement' and 'absolutely outstanding support given to us as a family'.

Students make good progress and show much perseverance and determination to succeed. The development of their social and communication skills is outstanding. By the time they leave school, they are well skilled in making their needs and wishes understood, with many students articulate and thoughtful in their responses.

Teaching is good, sometimes outstanding, and is enhanced effectively by associate and support staff contributions. Planning is thorough and students are involved well in setting and reviewing their personal learning goals, using information and communication technology (ICT) programs. Progress is tracked systematically and expectations are high. The school is aware that occasionally the challenge for a small number of more-able students could be even greater. It is taking action to address this and is increasing the number of courses leading to higher qualifications. Provision for students with ASD is evolving very effectively but is currently good rather than outstanding.

As a result of the excellent care, support and guidance they receive and their own enthusiastic engagement in the imaginative and innovative curriculum, students' behaviour is outstanding. Students' awareness of healthy lifestyles and their participation in physical activities are outstanding, and the school is justly proud of one of the students being selected for the Special Olympics.

Outstanding provision is made in the sixth form, which has developed a more effective and distinct identity since the last inspection. Older students have excellent support and well-chosen opportunities to help them make the transition from school to the next stages of their lives. These activities build on the independence they acquire as they progress through the school.

The headteacher provides clear, confident leadership and is ably supported by a senior management team who have complementary skills. Embedded monitoring systems ensure very accurate self-evaluation. Areas for improvement are precisely identified and acted upon in a timely and effective manner. Procedures and strategies for ensuring the safeguarding and protection of children are good. Specialist status has increased the school's wider community involvement and outstanding partnerships promote overseas

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links, music, media, sport, work-related learning and enterprise initiatives exceptionally well. The school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the existing good provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Consolidate the extended accreditation for more-able students

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with low attainment due to their complex and severe special educational needs and/or disabilities. They enjoy their learning, try very hard to be successful in their work and make outstanding gains in their social development. Their behaviour is outstanding both in the classroom and as they move about school. As a result, by the end of Key Stage 4, students make good and sometimes better progress from their starting points.

The school's analysis shows progress to be equally good for literacy and numeracy in all key stages. Last year, science was targeted as an area for improvement and an outdoor skills programme was introduced to creatively develop science experiences. This has had tremendous impact on students' performance in science, which this year shows the strongest levels of progress of the core areas of English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT).

Students with more complex needs learn to use picture exchange methods and signing systems very skilfully to promote effective communication. Information and communication technology and the use of assistive technology promote progress well. For example in a lesson on switch control, one student with PMLD took enormous delight in pressing the action switch to animate brightly coloured animal characters to music. The student's rapt attention to the screen and to the task engaged him fully as he worked through repetitions with changing images. These reinforced cause-effect learning, hand-eye coordination and, as the task progressed, his confidence to continue with greater independence.

Students who entered the school following re-designation have settled very well and are making good progress. Those in the care of the local authority and different groups of students, including those with additional needs, make progress that is equal to or better than their peers.

Students are polite, demonstrate high levels of respect and toleration, and understand the difference between right and wrong. They feel valued by the school and say their views are listened to, such as choosing the 'dream catcher' as the school logo. Many take responsibilities on the school council, others take part in fund-raising with the local fire brigade to send bicycles to Ghana. A buddy system provides effective peer support. As they progress through school, students develop excellent life-skills to equip them for the future. Their confidence and self-esteem rise and they become more independent in their actions. Effective links with colleges and local companies enable them to sample work and learn in the local community at their own pace.

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Cultural and spiritual development is good and supported well through assemblies where students reflect on their actions and celebrate their achievements. Students are provided with good opportunity to engage with others from different backgrounds, through a host of residential experiences and visits.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
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?

Teaching is enhanced by excellent relationships, high levels of cooperation and a good understanding of students' needs. Learning objectives are clear and displayed well, however, they are not always referred to in lessons. Plenary sessions check students' understanding well. In the best lessons, teaching is lively, planning builds effectively in small steps from previous learning, and challenging targets ensure students work to their individual potential. Good attention is paid to the way in which students learn and the school is not afraid to revisit teaching and learning styles to promote better outcomes, as shown in its evolving approach to teaching students with ASD. Mind-mapping and creative practical activities promote problem-solving and consolidate learning effectively. Withdrawal sessions for individuals or small groups, enhance reading skills and staff facilitate debate to enhance students' communication skills. For example, in a media lesson students were asked to comment upon a style of music selected by another group

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member. Cards to support, reject or challenge this choice were quickly held up to indicate individual opinion, which then had to be explained.

The outstanding curriculum is flexible and specifically developed to maximise its relevance to everyday life. The creative curriculum provides rich enhancement for theme-led learning, and different pathways lead to increasing levels of accreditation for students of all abilities. The curriculum is particularly enhanced by an excellent range of outdoor activities, sited in 'Forest School,' which promote team building, decision making and independent learning very effectively. Provision for those with ASD is generally good, in both discrete and in mixed-teaching groups. The school is keen to balance the benefits of both systems to maximise provision and has prioritised ongoing development. Provision for students with PMLD is outstanding. Specialist resources and the light room, support development very effectively through multi-sensory experiences and close monitoring of students' responses.

The colourful and informative display and bright classrooms contribute positively to a stimulating learning environment. Care, nursing and medical services meet personal and therapy needs sensitively, and demonstrate exceptionally well that multi-agency working is part of school life. Transition arrangements are outstanding. As a result of the encouragement and support provided at all levels, students have total confidence in staff and readily ask for help or guidance. At the end of the school day, intercom messages ask students by name to join their escorts for transport home, reinforcing the individual approach that permeates the school's functioning.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is very effectively leading the management of change as the school moves towards secondary phasing. Meeting and managing the needs of the increased PMLD and ASD cohorts has presented a challenge to which senior managers have risen exceptionally well. Morale is very high and the mix of experienced and newer staff has created a very positive workforce. There is a strong focus on school improvement and student progression. Senior managers have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of their effective tracking of students' progress and accurate self-evaluation. Plans to improve outcomes and provision are sharp and provide precise direction. The strengthening of the subject coordinator's role is bringing greater depth to tracking the curriculum. Teaching is good and continuing to improve rapidly. Student targets are set against national progression levels and a range of local and national comparative data.

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Day-to-day management of the school is very efficient. The governing body maintains a regular presence in school through which it has a good and first-hand knowledge of the school's performance. Engagement with parents and carers is good, communication routes are established and online reporting of students' progress is proving popular.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is good and well illustrated by its current focus on ensuring appropriate accreditation for all levels of student ability, particularly for more-able students. Safeguarding is good. Policies are implemented well and include internet safety. Staff are checked, risks assessed and there is a clear structure for child protection. The school has very good contact with local businesses. Through the community targets of its very recent specialism it provides strong support for local schools and the wider community. Meaningful links are being developed with a school in Ghana for students to have a better understanding of life outside their own country. The school provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Post-16 students enjoy their learning in the sixth form tremendously and attendance is good. They build on their previous knowledge and apply learning to their lives through a more collegiate approach to school. As a result of excellent relationships with staff and because teaching is good or better, students achieve very well, meeting and sometimes exceeding their targets, whatever their abilities. They make good progress in their basic skills and use ICT proficiently. Courses are carefully chosen to meet individual needs and lead to ASDAN vocational awards, modular units and entry level qualifications in the more academic subjects.

The outstanding work-related curriculum is central to everything that is undertaken in the sixth form. This flexible and extensive programme promotes students' personal

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development, confidence and self-esteem very effectively. Participation in Young Enterprise schemes allows friendly rivalry with other schools and promotes excellent business and work skills.

Students are particularly well cared for in the sixth form and very well supported in their studies. They make outstanding progress in their social and personal development and their behaviour is exemplary. Very good links with external providers ensure that students make informed choices about their next steps. This was clearly evident in a careers fair, which took place during the inspection, at which there was an excellent range of advisors and information and literature about future choices. Senior managers monitor the performance of the students and the quality of provision they receive very effectively. Resources are used very efficiently and the sixth form provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

About one third of eligible parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, the majority strongly supporting the school and its work. Most feel that their children enjoy school, that it meets their needs and is led and managed effectively. Very few concerns were expressed and these were followed up. Inspectors judged most aspects of the school to be good or outstanding and progress to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cavendish 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	68	9	26	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	68	11	32	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	47	15	44	0	0	2	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	50	13	38	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	59	12	35	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	47	10	29	5	15	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	50	12	35	1	3	1	3
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)	18	53	9	26	2	6	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	62	11	32	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	59	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	47	12	35	4	12	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	19	56	12	35	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	62	12	35	0	0	1	3

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.



24 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Cavendish School, Runcorn, WA7 4YX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and this is what we found.

Cavendish High is an outstanding school. Everyone there looks after you very well and it was lovely to see how much you like the staff, trust them to help you and to hear that you feel very safe. Your parents and carers told us that you enjoy your lessons and are very keen to learn. We thought so too. Your behaviour is excellent in class and around the school, and this really helps you to learn.

The teaching in your school is good and you make good progress in your work. We were very impressed with the huge range of exciting lessons that you can go to. The forest school is excellent, (but a bit muddy) and we were pleased that many of you choose sports clubs after school, which you say you enjoy.

The range of certificates older students work for is very good. We thought a few of you could achieve even more, so I have asked your headteacher to arrange this for you. You are very considerate towards one another and say that you take responsibility as school council members, buddies and fund-raisers, which is excellent. You think about how well you have done and I enjoyed hearing you speak in assembly about how you help other people. The two students who led the singing and prayer were very clear and confident – well done!

The school is very good at linking your work to activities that will help you when you leave school especially in the sixth form. You go on many visits and older pupils learn a lot from links with businesses and colleges. These help you to meet different people, make new friends and learn about work.

You can help to keep your school so good by always trying hard & just as you are doing now. My best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Linda Clare

Lead inspector

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