

Ellen Tinkham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113633
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357381
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Scott 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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Anna Schlapp
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Warne
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
School address	Hollow Lane Pinhoe, Exeter EX1 3RW
Telephone number	01392 467168
Fax number	01392 464011
Email address	Admin@exeter-ellen-tinkham.devon.sch.uk

Age group	4–19
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Inspection number	357381

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Fourteen lessons were observed and meetings held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's policies and procedures, progress tracking information, a wide range of case studies and pupils' work. Sixty three parental questionnaires were also considered.

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

- The impact of the school's person-centred approach across the school.
- The impact of developments in the Further Education (FE) area and how well the school prepares students for the next stages of learning and life.

Information about the school

Ellen Tinkham School is a special school with provision for children from Early Years Foundation Stage through to students in Year 14 in Further Education. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. This includes pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and physical impairments. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage and their first language is English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is around twice that found nationally. The school is located on the same site as residential care facilities that are not managed by the school but support some pupils attending the school.

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

1

Main findings

Ellen Tinkham School is an extremely successful school with pupils' needs driving improvements through a well-developed person-centred approach. This ethos and the extremely committed and enthusiastic team of professionals in the school, ensure pupils have a highly tailored curriculum and their care needs are met tremendously well.

The school works successfully in partnership with a wide range of professionals and other organisations as well as with the pupils, parents and carers in order to meet individual pupils' needs. A clear and effective process of planning and assessment tracks progress in meeting a wide range of highly challenging targets. The targets are related to the next steps for learning and aid pupils in becoming increasingly independent in relation to their own personal circumstances. Although students' attainment is below that found nationally by the time they leave the sixth form, known in the school as FE, many have work experience, life skills and an increasing range of national accreditation such as entry level certificates.

Teaching in the school is good overall as teachers know pupils very well. Teachers effectively plan a wide range of opportunities for all pupils to develop skills and have different experiences. Teaching assistants are an integral part of the school team and are very successful in ensuring that pupils are able to engage in lessons. On occasions, some pupils have to wait too long for support to access learning. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure they allow sufficient time for pupils to respond to questions and experiences, but do not always take advantage of all opportunities to develop or consolidate learning further. They have very strong positive relationships with pupils and the robust team ethos supports the very strong sense of community in the school.

Pupils contribute a great deal to school life and the school council was able to explain how it had made decisions about the school playgrounds and the work they want to do raising money for charities through organising events. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They build confidence as they increase their understanding of how to keep safe and work more independently. They make decisions about how they will do things with the trust of staff to support them when required. The trust they build in school helps pupils to engage in learning opportunities beyond the school and when they move on to other settings in the wider community.

The school is not complacent in its success and is clear about how things can be further improved. The higher level of analysis of the school's progress tracking will allow even greater refinement to provision and interventions. The developments in the FE area since the last inspection demonstrate the outstanding capacity of leaders to develop the school further. Governors are skilled and committed with a clear view of how they can help in moving the school forward by developing monitoring systems still further.

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

The school has made an extremely positive contribution to the local community. Changing attitudes to special needs and working with a wide range of committed partners, employers and professionals add an immense amount to the pupils' experience.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine teaching by ensuring that pace is maintained throughout lessons by ensuring that all opportunities to develop and consolidate learning are used and downtime is minimised.
- Refine the progress tracking systems further to allow greater depth to analysis of data and give wider whole-school analysis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils make excellent progress towards well-defined and challenging targets and achievement in its widest sense is outstanding. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, personal development and understanding of how to operate more independently are key factors to learning. In one lesson, for example, pupils were able to demonstrate how they work independently and make choices about what they will do next while preparing food for their peers. The ongoing assessment by teachers and teaching assistants means that there is a very clear picture about progress of pupils in the classroom. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy school and that all staff support them. Pupils are encouraged to make a wide range of choices. They explained how they can keep themselves safe in the community and are able to make choices to reduce their anxiety in difficult situations. The development of advocates for pupils and the use of advocates in person-centred reviews mean that pupils have a real and effective voice in their own learning. Behaviour in the school is outstanding and pupils, relative to their own circumstances, demonstrate a high level of empathy and understanding for fellow pupils as well as a fully subscribing to the caring and positive school ethos.

There are a wide range of opportunities developed to ensure pupils are not excluded and are successful in working in a variety of contexts, both social and academic. The enthusiasm pupils have for the new experiences highlights the trust they place in staff. This encourages them to safely take risks in their learning. Some pupils require extended periods of absence for professional support such as medical interventions and this has an impact on the overall attendance in the school. Attendance is low overall but the school is clear about the impact of this, working hard to ensure it is minimised. The school is highly flexible in the opportunities it provides and builds on the strengths and interests of pupils. Pupils are involved in access studies, in the local community, as well as contributing to the assessment of their own school such as the fire-safety audits undertaken by pupils. All of these factors contribute significantly to pupils' economic well-being and future reduced dependency on other adults.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is enhanced by opportunities to study and to experience other cultures and take part in the projects in art. Pupils have had public exhibitions in the town's art gallery and have opportunities to reflect spiritually on life and experiences.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

The school's ethos is centred around a core promise of person-centred planning and provision. This includes the regular review of progress and action planning to ensure pupils' needs are known and catered for effectively within the curriculum as progress is made. The team approach and hard work of the school ensure pupils have a real voice, with the development of high quality advocacy that is used to good effect throughout the processes in the school. The high level of involvement in planning of stakeholders and the rigorous way action points are followed up support the well-being of pupils and encourage progress regardless of challenges faced by individuals.

Care, guidance and support of pupils and teaching come together to ensure a personalised and ever-adapting curriculum to balance the range of needs of all pupils. The high level of continuous training and collaboration between the staff ensures pupils enjoy dignity and independence within their individual limits.

Lessons are typified by carefully planned appropriate experiences to ensure all pupils access learning. Lessons are very successful as teachers work collaboratively with teaching assistants. All adults in classrooms and across the administration and support roles add to the learning of pupils. The level of patience and support given across the school is highly effective. Inspectors regularly observed teachers and assistants ensuring appropriate time

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

was allowed for responses to questions and experiences. For example, while planting seeds adults ensured pupils had a wide range of sensory experiences with the tools and materials. Teaching assistants and teachers lead elements of lessons, and the quality of experiences pupils get reflects the excellent skills of the staff teams. Although some outstanding practice in teaching was observed, some questioning and tasks could have been further refined. Opportunities were lost then in developing understanding further or putting learning into a wider context. At times the pace of learning slowed as pupils required greater assistance with accessing experiences. There was some very good use of technology, for example in the use of specialist switches to communicate and for pupils to experience for themselves operating machinery.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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 and school team are highly effective in ensuring the school moves forward with a clear vision for the future. Staff enjoy working in the school and morale is high. The school is refining further the way in which it analyses its own performance and is not complacent about its success so far. This has ensured that the school is an extremely effective learning organisation that has developed a curriculum to meet the individual needs. It is now developing further its increasingly systematic approach to development of teaching and learning.

The school has a clear view of its many strengths and also the areas that it wants to improve further. The development of the FE provision is a clear example of where the school has identified areas for improvement and then taken decisive action to move things rapidly forward.

Staff are proud to be a part of Ellen Tinkham School and have a clear understanding of the school's direction and the part they can play. Governors contribute a great deal to the school and are very active in both challenging and supporting it. They are clear how they can contribute even more as they develop their systems further in monitoring the impact across the school. Safeguarding procedures are good. Communications with parents and carers are very positive and the school promotes equality of opportunity very well. The advocates for pupils and person-centred planning are very effective strategies in ensuring all pupils are not excluded from opportunities in the school and wider community.

The school is very strong in its promotion of community cohesion at a local level and is developing increasingly greater impact nationally and internationally with links with other schools and with the work it is doing in contributing to professional development of educators.

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

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage setting is an integral part of the school's 4 to 19 provision and offers the same high quality of experience as in the rest of the school

The curriculum like in the rest of the school is highly tailored to the needs of individuals. Transition arrangements are effective and parents and carers are supported well when children are allocated a place in the school. This allows children to settle quickly and start to make progress rapidly. The school is very flexible in its approach and is able to reassure parents and carers that the very high expectations of the school are not beyond their child.

The care and wide range of knowledgeable and experienced staff mean that children's needs are assessed and met through the similar person-centred approach to the rest of the school. Leaders ensure parents and carers are involved with the regular reviews and become familiar with the person-centred processes and engage with the school effectively.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation	1

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

Stage

--

Sixth form

The sixth form element of the school, known as 'FE', is highly effective in building on the successes earlier in the school. It is an integral part of the whole-school provision but recognises the increased choices that the young adults in the school want and exercise.

The leadership of the FE area is highly effective and demonstrates a very focused approach to school development. The improvements in outcomes for students in the sixth form are brought about through very careful planning and a thorough understanding of all of the individuals in FE. The passion and professionalism that runs throughout the school is clearly demonstrated by the outstanding outcomes for students in FE. Students have a wide range of appropriate destinations and were able to explain how they were looking forward to the next stages of learning and increasing independence. The curriculum is very well matched to each student and is seamlessly integrated with the care needs, support and clear targets from person-centred planning processes.

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

The parents and carers that responded to the questionnaire are generally extremely happy with the school. Many comments praised the person-centred approach and feel the school meets the needs of their child very well. A small number of parents and carers felt that they would like to be listened to more and that there had been a high staff turnover. The systems in the school for communication are highly effective but it is not complacent about parents' and carers' concerns. There had been a number of staff leave over a short period of time. The governors were aware of this and are taking appropriate action on this issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ellen Tinkham 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 122 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	71	14	22	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	70	16	25	3	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	56	22	35	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	49	23	37	9	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	63	18	29	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	60	16	25	8	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	63	19	30	2	3	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)	35	56	17	27	5	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	62	17	27	5	8	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	41	18	29	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	56	22	35	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	68	15	24	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	67	16	25	0	0	2	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.



4 March 2011

Dear Children, Pupils and Students

Inspection of Ellen Tinkham School, Exeter EX1 3RW

I would like to thank you all for the help you gave us when we visited your outstanding school. We really enjoyed the visit and particularly enjoyed the food prepared by the FE students.

Your teachers and all of the adults in the school form a very effective team to make sure you have a wide range of opportunities for success. You play your part by making the most of these opportunities and along with your outstanding behaviour contribute a great deal to the school. The school council was able to explain all about its work and how it has improved things such as the playground and your work for charities. We were impressed by all sorts of things in the school including the work experience and jobs you do, the art work, sport and ballroom dancing.

You have teachers that know you very well and are able to plan very personalised experiences to make sure you make outstanding progress overall. From the beginnings in the early years you build your confidence and independent skills and by the time you leave the FE you are able to live more independent lives. Teachers are keen to make things even better and, along with the headteacher, will look at the progress you make already and try to see if this can be improved by learning from what works really well and by making sure even more opportunities to challenge you all are taken. Some pupils do not attend as much and they miss out on some of the opportunities in the school.

It was a real pleasure and privilege to see your school in action and I wish you the very best for the future.

Best wishes

Paul Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.