

Nether Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120361
Local Authority	Leicester
Inspection number	358744
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones 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	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Keene
Headteacher	Erica Dennies
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Inspectors observed 17 lessons and saw 11 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and teaching staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at the school's improvement plan, policies and safeguarding information. The inspectors scrutinised 20 parental questionnaires alongside staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- How effective are the strategies to support all pupils to attend full time?
- Are learning and progress good enough across subjects and groups of pupils?
- How effective is the teaching of basic skills: literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology?

Information about the school

Nether Hall School is an average-sized special school which provides education for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and one pupil is dual-registered with a local school. The school serves the City of Leicester. Around three-quarters of pupils have minority ethnic heritages and many have English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has gained Healthy School status and Active Mark. The headteacher returned to school in January after a prolonged illness during which the deputy headteacher was acting headteacher.

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 where the outstanding level of care provided helps pupils to successfully overcome their complex learning and physical difficulties. This enables them to make good progress in their learning, their personal development and their social skills. Pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve well, developing skills in communication and independent living. They are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and express their own opinions. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils show each other kindness and consideration. Pupils' awareness of risks and dangers is extremely good without being overpowering. They know how to keep themselves healthy and safe and they are keen to volunteer to take on responsibilities around the school such as raising money for charity. Pupils develop spiritually and culturally through the wide range of activities and experiences offered such as celebrating religious festivals from a wide range of different faiths and producing high quality art work from a range of different cultures. Although the school is rigorous in checking attendance, it remains satisfactory because many pupils have time off for medical reasons and a few pupils take long holidays in term time. Lessons at the start of the school day do not always begin on time because of pupils' lateness caused by transport problems.

The school is a very caring and inclusive community where learners feel safe and secure. The consistent routines and high quality behaviour management strategies are used to reduce stress levels for pupils and enable them to concentrate on their work. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding lessons seen, and staff are committed and dedicated. Effective use is made of skilled teaching assistants to give individual attention where needed. The highly personalised curriculum is relevant to the different learning needs of pupils. Sufficient emphasis is placed on basic skills of literacy, numeracy and computer skills which are combined with different forms of communication and sensory experiences. However, currently students at post-16 do not have the opportunity to choose from a range of vocational or external qualifications.

The school is well led and managed. The leadership team has created a happy and hard-working school with high expectations where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. Parents and carers are kept well informed and involved with the work of the school. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is very accurate in its self-evaluation and in identifying what it needs to do to continue to improve. There are detailed school improvement plans in place for every curriculum area and the capacity for future improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Redouble efforts to improve attendance and punctuality to school by:

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- impressing on parents and carers the need to send their children to school regularly
 - resolving local transport issues
 - establishing stronger links with the local faith communities.
- Widen the range of vocational and external accreditation opportunities for older students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy their work and are able to settle quickly and concentrate. As a result, academic progress is good. The school analyses progress carefully and uses data well to plan for individual pupils. Consequently, pupils throughout the school make good progress in lessons whatever the nature of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, ethnicity or social background. They make good progress in their communication skills, using signing and symbols, computer communication systems and speech. They gain confidence in expressing their views and in socialising with one another. They particularly enjoy the practical aspects of their work such as searching for living things outside in a science lesson and older students acting out a role-play they had produced in English. The very few pupils who are an early stage of learning English are well-supported and make good progress.

Pupils make great strides in their social development as they learn to respect and work alongside others. They know the difference between right and wrong, as is apparent in their excellent behaviour. All pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school, and that bullying rarely happens. They all have a range of staff they would talk to if there was a problem. They know how to take care of themselves in and out of school. Pupils know they need to eat fruit and vegetables to keep healthy and they understand they need to exercise. Pupils are mostly calm, patient and supportive of each other. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community through, for example, being on the school council and helping at the local home for the elderly. After making allowance for pupils who are absent for medical reasons, attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school and many manage to access some form of work experience. They are helped to achieve realistic aspirations and go onto appropriate college courses.

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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	1
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	3
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?

Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled and dedicated. They know and respond extremely well to the medical needs of the pupils whilst minimising the disruption to learning. Outstanding relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils ensure a calm working atmosphere where pupils can concentrate and do their best. Teachers make good use of a range of activities to elicit positive responses from pupils. For example, as part of National Science Week all classes in the school received a visit from an organisation with a range of animals which the pupils could examine and touch. The pupils were fascinated and many reacted physically and some verbally to this stimulus. Lessons are generally very well planned and motivating. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow and more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. High quality tracking of pupils' progress takes place and is regularly checked for accuracy.

The curriculum is broad and well adapted to the needs of all pupils at each age and stage of their education and for pupils with differing needs. It is planned imaginatively with strong cross-curricular links to reinforce language, social and physical development. However, a very few pupils do not receive a full timetable and time at the start of the school day is not always used effectively, with some pupils arriving late to registration and

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even to lessons. Many visits including residential trips, clubs and sporting activities enhance learning and make it fun and exciting.

Outstanding, individual support is provided for pupils according to the nature of their medical and social needs. Skilled teaching assistants play a pivotal role in helping pupils learn and gain independence. Well-targeted support for pupils is based on very good staff knowledge and expertise that develops from careful observation and monitoring of pupils' needs and progress and close links with families. Case studies demonstrate exceptionally effective efforts by the school to work collaboratively with other agencies to meet the needs of the pupils. The school works hard to improve attendance and punctuality and there are signs that this is slowly improving.

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?

The headteacher has a clear vision for improving achievement. She and the deputy headteacher have built a stable, close-knit, dedicated team whose members all work together well for the benefit of the pupils. As a result, the school has been able to maintain forward momentum throughout the absence of the headteacher due to ill health. Middle managers carry out their roles well and have helped to improve achievement in key areas. The governing body is very knowledgeable about and supportive of the school. It uses its professional expertise well to hold the school to account by asking challenging questions and raising areas of concern. However, it struggles to recruit parent and carer representatives.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate but monitoring of teaching has tended to focus on the role of the teacher instead of on the amount of learning taking place. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It has a policy and has carried out an audit. The cultural diversity of the school and all faiths are celebrated. Growing links with local businesses have led to a greater presence for the school in the local community. Work in art and music and raising funds for charity have helped pupils towards an appreciation of the global dimension. Clear equalities policies are in place, which are effective because the curriculum is tailored exceptionally well to meet individual needs. Policies and procedures cover all aspects of safeguarding and have been used as models of good practice by the local authority. These are regularly reviewed, and at the time of the inspection, all safeguarding requirements were addressed. Child protection procedures are clearly understood and meticulously adhered to and their impact is clearly seen in the handling of pupils and security awareness.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Lessons are kept short and are followed by free-flow play sessions which give children a great deal of choice and independence. Well-planned outdoor learning opportunities are available every day. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of each child's personality and medical issues and use this well to foster social development and communication skills. Staff are well led by a team leader who is up to date with expectations, the curriculum and aims for this age group. Children's welfare is promoted effectively and their care and safety ensured. Regular internal reviews keep an accurate check on children's progress. Positive links have been established with parents and carers, support agencies and primary schools to ensure the best outcomes for the children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Sixth form

Students make good progress in the sixth form and grow in maturity and confidence. They enjoy the more grown-up atmosphere and are given adult tasks such as shopping and preparing their own lunch. All achieve the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (Asdan) accreditation and leave to go onto training or education placements. This is as a result of good quality careers education and guidance, work placements and transition courses. The links with local colleges are a strong feature where some students are able to spend part of the week studying a range of courses to suit their individual needs. New opportunities for students to achieve a wider range of external and vocational qualifications are being planned by the enthusiastic team leader who has just taken over this role.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A smaller-than-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the parental questionnaire but those who did were overwhelmingly positive in their support for the school. As one parent wrote, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the teachers and staff who work at Nether Hall school. They do a very difficult job and I have every trust in what they do. I am very pleased to send my daughter to this school and look at Nether Hall as an extension to our family'. Inspectors saw evidence to support these views in the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Nether Hall 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 79 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	80	3	15	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	75	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	65	6	30	0	0	1	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	65	7	35	0	0	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)	11	55	8	40	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	75	4	20	0	0	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	15	75	4	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0

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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nether Hall School, Leicester, LE5 1DT

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we inspected your school on 16 and 17 March. We enjoyed talking with you. Nether Hall is a good school. Shown below are our findings about what is good about your school and what it needs to do to get even better.

The good things about your school are:

You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well, are polite and friendly and kind to others.

You are making good progress in improving your communication skills and developing self-confidence.

You told us that you feel very safe in school and are very well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.

Teaching is good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants.

You enjoy the good range of sports, arts and other activities provided for you in school and at lunchtime.

The school is very well managed and good links are made with your parents and carers, and local colleges and businesses that can help you.

Things that could be improved:

You need to come to school each day on time if you possibly can.

Older students need to be able to choose from a wider range of qualifications.

We wish all of you success in the future and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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