

Langside School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133740
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	381546
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Mascal

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hughes
Headteacher	John Ashby
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
School address	Langside Avenue Poole BH12 5BN
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Age group	2–19
Inspection date(s)	20–21 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Mascall

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed nine lessons or parts of lessons taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with senior staff, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and two parents. Discussions were also held with multi-agency staff based in the school. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for development, records of pupils' attainment and progress and their work, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. In addition, the inspector took account of the responses of 13 parents and carers and 28 members of staff to the inspection questionnaires. Pupils did not complete the Ofsted questionnaire.

Information about the school

Langside is a smaller-than-average special school. It caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils have very complex medical needs. The vast majority are unable to speak and use a range of techniques to communicate. All have statements of special educational needs. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is very small. At the time of the inspection there was a very small number of pupils in the care of the local authority. The school has a very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and has had no children under the age of four for some 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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Langside School is a good school. The sixth form is also good. The excellent care and support the school provides for its pupils and the high priority placed on ensuring that pupils have good opportunities to develop their communication skills ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education. The school is not outstanding because of minor weaknesses in teaching, in the setting of pupils’ targets and in governance.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning. They extend their skills in communication and their knowledge and understanding of the world around them very well. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in the sixth form make equally good progress. Occasionally, pupils’ targets for learning are not sufficiently precise or measurable to ensure all make even better progress.
- The quality of teaching is good. The excellent teamwork and very good understanding of pupils’ special educational needs ensure that resources and planning support pupils’ progress well. Sometimes learning support assistants are not given the chance to take an active enough role in helping individuals to learn.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils’ care and welfare are at the heart of all the school does. There is excellent teamwork between staff and the health and medical teams. As a result, pupils are safe and their enjoyment of school is very evident in the positive ways they participate in all the activities. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well through the curriculum.
- Strong leadership has ensured that the school has continued to improve and develop. This is very evident in the rigorous approach to improving teacher performance and the setting of challenging targets for each teacher. The governing body is supportive but has not yet developed its role sufficiently well to challenge the effectiveness of the school’s actions in improving pupils’ progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable pupils to make outstanding progress by ensuring that:
 - the targets within their individual education plans are more precise and measurable
 - support staff are empowered to take more responsibility in supporting the learning of individuals.
- Develop the role of the governing body so that it can challenge more effectively the success of the school's actions in raising students' achievements.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The nature of the pupils' learning needs means that attainment is well below that normally expected. This includes reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, pupils and those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their low starting points and achieve well. Key to their success is the good progress they make in communicating and making choices. Many, when they start school, have very limited strategies but over time they learn to use switches or eye or head movements to indicate their knowledge and understanding. Although few can use signs, pupils develop their understanding of different signs. Two pupils, for example, followed a video programme that helped them learn new words in Makaton. They showed clear enjoyment of the songs and responded well to these.

Pupils' numeracy skills improve and pupils show a good understanding of number and space and shape. This was evident in a lesson where they experienced a range of oval-shaped objects and identified whether they were large or small. They develop their physical and social skills very well. For example, in physical education they made decisions about the teams they wanted to be in when playing Boccia and used their skills effectively to roll the ball near to the target. Sixth form students' good progress is reflected in their ability to select the correct day and month of the year. One young person correctly recalled the month we were in, whilst another was able to choose the right symbol showing what the weather was like outside.

The inspector agrees with parents' and carers' positive views about the progress their children are making and how much their children enjoy school. Progress though is not outstanding because the setting of targets is not always sufficiently precise. Pupils clearly relish all that goes on in school and there is much enjoyment on the part of all involved in lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic about the activities and are keen to participate, whether it is in exploring different shapes or different textures or helping to choose the colours and decoration for the sixth form kitchen. There is no evidence of any groups of pupils achieving less well than their peers, including those who are in the care of the local authority or those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

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Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are positive about the quality of teaching. Their views can be summarised by one who wrote, 'My son has been both supported and challenged by his teacher and continues to make outstanding progress.' Whilst teaching is good it is not outstanding because better use could be made of support staff to help pupils in their learning.

Staff are very committed to ensuring the planned curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of pupils. They work very closely with the multi-agency teams so that even when pupils are being moved and positioned for stretching they ensure that there are activities going on at the same time to support learning. Planning is detailed and resources are often excellent and thought through well so that each pupil gains the maximum from each experience. In science, for example, pupils were planting tomato seeds but were encouraged to consider what they would need to enable the seeds to grow. They experienced a range of sensory activities, including tasting and smelling tomatoes as well as filling pots with soil and putting in the seeds. The involvement of all staff was good and supported progress well.

Opportunities though are missed to give more responsibility to learning support staff. Occasionally teachers take too much control of learning, leading sessions while other staff sit with the pupils and watch. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher bounced a ball three times and threw the ball to each child in turn while support staff and pupils watched. This slowed the pace of learning and support staff did not have the resources to carry out the activity with their pupils. The pace of the lesson improved later when each learning support assistant was then given a balloon to explore, on a one-to-one basis, with the pupils.

Pupils' targets for learning are generally detailed, but on occasions they are too broad and not specific enough about the small steps that pupils need to make to progress further. Because of this, targets are sometimes difficult to measure in order to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress. Good photographic records are kept of pupils' achievements, which are used effectively to support pupils' progress and assess the levels pupils work at. Teachers work well together to ensure there are good links between subjects, and that literacy and numeracy are promoted well in a range of experiences. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in all lessons. Pupils work well together and show awe and wonder in many aspects of their sensory work, as when experiencing 'a storm' in music.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The inspector fully agrees with parents' and carers' views that behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Parents and carers do not consider that there are any problems regarding behaviour and are overwhelmingly positive about the fact that their children are safe in school and well looked after. From the moment they arrive and are welcomed by the headteacher, they are keen to get to their classes. They

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acknowledge with smiles and eye movements how pleased they are to be in school and respond positively to staff's interactions. Pupils socialise well, as in the lunchtime club and in whole-school lessons. In a music lesson, for example, they worked together to produce music that reflected the sounds of a storm. They celebrated each other's successes and understood the idea of taking turns. There is no evidence of bullying of any form.

The work of staff and the multi-agency team ensures that pupils' physical and medical needs are met extremely well. Detailed risk assessments and feeding plans, together with a highly trained team of nurses and physiotherapists, enable pupils to be supported well throughout the day and so access learning in a safe and positive environment. Pupils' attendance is high and only affected when pupils are absent because of illness.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have been effective in continuing to drive the school forward. Development planning is detailed and reflects the school's good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. The monitoring of teaching is particularly robust. Very detailed feedback is given to each teacher after any lesson observation. Records show the positive impact of this in improving teaching and ensuring a consistent approach to many aspects of teaching. Middle managers carry out their roles well and keep detailed files of their monitoring and improvements. They have a clear overview of pupils' progress, but the school is in the process of extending their skills further to enable them to take more responsibility in tracking pupils' progress. At present this is done effectively by senior managers and ensures that all pupils have equality of opportunity to make progress and achieve well. The school has rightly recognised the need to make pupils' targets more measurable so that the small steps in progress are more easily identifiable.

Discrimination in any form is not tolerated by school leaders or staff. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas requiring further improvement. At present, though, they do not always challenge the school about the impact of initiatives to improve learners' progress. However, minutes of meetings show good commitment to improving the school and there is clear evidence of an increasing level of challenge. Good attention is paid by school leaders and governors to safeguarding arrangements and the vetting of staff is thorough. All these factors show that the school has the capacity to continue to improve at its present good pace.

The good curriculum supports learning well, providing an array of experiences which pupils value. Links with local schools and colleges enable pupils to experience other settings and to work with pupils from mainstream schools as well as pupils in other special schools. There are opportunities for residential experiences, which pupils, parents and carers clearly value. Very good links with parents and carers ensure that they are kept fully informed of the daily activities and their children's progress. Training opportunities provided by staff, including the speech and language team,

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ensure that parents and carers can support their children at home. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well and underpins all aspects of the curriculum. Excellent displays throughout the school reflect the many opportunities pupils have to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Langside School, Poole BH12 5BN

Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful when I came to visit you recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you all and seeing how hard you work.

I agree with your parents and carers that Langside is a good school. It was very clear that you love school and that you feel safe. All the grown-ups make sure you are well looked after and that your medical and physical needs are taken care of.

The teachers make sure there is a lot to do in lessons and that you learn lots! I have asked the school to make sure that the targets you have to help you learn are a bit better so it can measure how well you are doing. All the grown-ups in lessons work well to help you but I have asked the teachers to let the learning support assistants do more to help you learn.

The headteacher and the staff work hard to make sure the school gets even better and we have asked them to make sure the governors know more about how well you are doing so they can ask the staff lots of questions!

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascal
Lead inspector

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