

Sandside Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112466
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357105
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen 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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Stephenton
Headteacher	Mrs Jen Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Sandside Road Ulverston Cumbria LA12 9EF
Telephone number	01229 894180
Fax number	01229 894180
Email address	admin@sandsidelodge.cumbria.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. They observed nine lessons taught by seven teachers, a principal teaching assistant and a higher level teaching assistant. Of these lessons, three were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. The inspectors held meetings with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, the assessment manager, support staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, school development, pupils' progress and individual programmes as well as photographs and records of pupils' experiences. Inspectors also considered the responses to questionnaires from 31 parents and carers, 26 members of staff and 36 pupils from Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

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

- How well information from the assessment of pupils' progress is being used to personalise learning and maximise achievement.
- The effectiveness of the work of teachers and support staff in ensuring that pupils meet their targets.
- Whether there is sufficient leadership and management expertise and knowledge to sustain the drive for improvement.

Information about the school

All pupils at Sandside have a statement of special educational needs for severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many also have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. About a quarter of the pupils are under the age of 11. They generally have highly complex needs and often require medical support. In the last years there has been an increase in the number of secondary age pupils who join Sandside from mainstream primary schools.

The majority of pupils come by taxi each day, travelling some distance from their homes in South Lakeland and the Furness peninsula. Nearly all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Two children are in the care of the local authority.

When the school was inspected in January 2010 it was given a notice to improve. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned in the summer and the headteacher in late September. An experienced senior leader, placed in the school by the local authority, is the acting headteacher until July 2011. A recently appointed substantive headteacher takes up post in September. From September 2010, the 18 students in the sixth form have attended Ulverston Victoria High School for some lessons. When part of Sandside was rendered unusable in late December as a result of water damage from burst pipes, these pupils and most others in Key Stages 3 and 4 have been based at the high school in the Woodgarth annexe.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Sandside provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has sustained the good personal development of pupils, as identified in the inspection of January 2010, and strengthened to good the quality of the provision for the youngest pupils, the systems to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and the procedures for safeguarding. Strength in current leadership and governance has had a marked impact especially in the last two terms. Parents, carers, staff and pupils comment on the changes for the better, the rise in morale and the enthusiasm to move forward 'now we are on the runway to success' (member of staff). These remarks reflect the clear direction, the work to tackle inefficient practices and the holding of people to account by the acting headteacher, the governing body and senior leaders. As a result, in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The governing body and staff are well aware that there is much to do to ensure that the school provides the very best for its pupils. Visits to other schools, professional development sessions, the revision of procedures and the introduction of clear systems have heightened the realisation that Sandside has not kept pace with other schools. Subject leadership is in the early stages. The school's prime strength lies in its success in engendering pupils' enjoyment of school, their confidence, independence and skills for life after leaving Sandside. All pupils either go on to college or into employment which often results from carefully selected work placements. Staff are now also aware of the need to ensure that pupils make the most academic progress possible. The tracking of pupils' progress in the last year shows that, while a sizeable proportion made good progress and some made outstanding progress, especially in reading, too many did not achieve enough. This mixed picture reflects strengths and weaker aspects in the teaching and curriculum, which are satisfactory overall. While individual programmes are thoughtfully devised, the school does not always pinpoint, look for and record tiny steps in progress, particularly of those pupils with multiple needs. Parents and carers are kept well informed of what their children have done but less about how they have improved and what can be done at home to support them. The best teaching interests pupils, skilfully manages their behaviour, balances the revision of learning with new learning in small steps and provides just enough support to enable pupils to succeed. Not all the expected learning for individuals is defined sharply enough.

Recent changes in provision are beginning to pay off. The youngest pupils have a good balance of theme related adult directed and self-chosen experiences inside and out. The positive impact of school-wide structured teaching of letter sounds and spelling patterns is showing in pupils' reading and spelling. The introduction of entry level GCSE work for the most able and experiences leading to the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation

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Network (ASDAN) bronze award have widened the opportunities for the accreditation of older pupils' personal and academic achievement.

The unforeseen, but very well managed move to Woodgarth for most of the older pupils has been providential. Staff and pupils are benefiting from contact with high school students and staff, and from opportunities to use specialist facilities. The annexe oozes learning with bright displays that celebrate pupils' work and personal achievements. This is not as prevalent at Sandside where there is potential to make more of the accommodation and staff expertise to pupils' benefit, and to give pupils an even greater part and say in the running of the school and what it offers.

The school knows it faces change not least because of the appointment of a new headteacher but more so from the increasing number of pupils joining the school and from the rising proportion with multiple needs who require the well coordinated involvement of many support agencies. Not all staff are fully aware of the implications of pupils' different conditions and what might be done to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. Nevertheless, the raised expectations, the positive impact of recent initiatives, and the growing skill in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school indicate satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' learning and boost achievement by ensuring that:
 - planning, monitoring and evaluation of lessons focus on the learning of individuals
 - daily provision is closely linked to behaviour targets, care targets and targets from pupils' individual education plans
 - teaching is broken down into small, linked steps and staff provide a clear model of what pupils are to do
 - all staff recognise and celebrate tiny steps in learning, especially for those pupils with profound and complex needs.
- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of the increasingly complex needs of pupils and have the relevant expertise to meet them.
- Develop the skills and competencies of school leaders, especially those of subject leaders, to drive school improvement and lead by example.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement overall is not as good as it could be because learning is too variable. Pupils know they have targets and want to meet them. They are proud of their work. Two Key Stage 3 boys were very pleased when they took digital photographs of flower arrangements and had not 'chopped bits off' as had happened previously. They made good progress in handling the camera and talking about what they needed to remember because of prompts from the support assistant. In some cases, however, small steps in learning go unnoticed by adults or pupils are not challenged enough.

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All the pupils who responded to the questionnaire said they enjoyed school. Their overall attendance compares well with that of pupils in mainstream schools. They say they feel safe and know there is always someone to tell if they have worries. Older pupils felt confident enough to lead an assembly for high school students on what they liked about being at Woodgarth. They generally behave well and are tolerant of others. They accept there are occasional incidents but say that there is no bullying. They like helping one another by, for example, pushing wheelchairs and passing items. On the whole, pupils concentrate and try hard. Key Stage 2 pupils were willing to have a go at forming the letter u on the big whiteboard and then to practise writing their name. Work in books is often neat and the good quality of presentation and content of Key Stage 3 pupils' letters, in the form of parents writing to their children evacuated in wartime, did them credit.

Pupils gain a good understanding of staying safe and healthy living. Older pupils are coping well with the stairs and different site conditions at Woodgarth. Pupils enjoy sport and know that the washing of hands is essential before handling food. They learn to manage money, shop for themselves, and some to travel alone to work placements. A wide range of school and community events as well as fund raising activities, including Red Nose Day, contributes much to pupils' personal development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	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.

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How effective is the provision?

Supportive relationships and a good level of care ensure that all pupils enjoy and benefit from their time in school. The weekly toddler session in the Early Years class helps children to socialise before they start. Parents and carers appreciate the way that teams of support staff work with their children to help them to manage their emotions, communicate with others and to be as independent as possible. Staff are calm, positive and encouraging in their interactions with pupils, often diverting outbursts and regaining pupils' interest. They use signing, picture cards, touch and praise, such as 'Good looking', to focus pupils' attention and to encourage pupils to respond to adults' questions. As much contact is adult to pupil, there is scope in lessons to foster pupil pairings and groups to develop communication between pupils, especially for those who have limited skills, and for those who tend to rely on adults to speak for them. In lessons, some adults are too quick to supply an answer or to act for a pupil. Where teaching is strongest, all adults draw on their knowledge of individual pupils to remind them of their targets, check what they understand, rehearse elements where pupils have difficulties and praise success.

Themes, topics and a wide range of activities in and out of the classroom foster effectively life skills as well as links with reading, writing and mathematics. For example, during the inspection, differing pupils went on a walk, gardened, went shopping and worked on items that they intend to sell. It is too early to evaluate the impact of recent initiatives, including new pathways for academic accreditation.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Momentum for change has gathered pace in the last six months. With the full backing of the governing body, the acting headteacher has done sterling work in resolving issues, dealing with inconsistent practice and heightening staff's awareness of what needs to be different and why. Safeguarding procedures have been tightened and are effective. Consideration of pupils' safety and needs was paramount in planning the move of the older pupils to Woodgarth. Senior leaders have taken on new responsibilities and action plan targets have been met. The governing body is effective in ratifying policies, challenging custom and practice and looking critically at the use of resources. The vice-chair has worked with staff to initiate subject leadership. Although the regular monitoring of teaching has led to staff acting on points to improve their practice, the emphasis has not been sufficiently on what makes the difference in pupils' learning. The findings from data tracking pupils' progress have been used well to question why some pupils have done exceptionally well and others have not made the progress expected. As a result, staff

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accept that adjustments in expectations and provision are necessary to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can. The school has widened its contact with families through newsletters, texting and support sessions. Families are kept updated on themes, events and lessons through daily diaries, pupils' weekly reviews and the annual overview. However, these do not always clarify significant steps in progress or what can be done at home to support and reinforce learning at school. Pupils' overall personal development is good partly because links with the local community offer a range of experiences but less has been done to foster pupils' interaction with, and appreciation of, differing social and cultural communities.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

All pupils under the age of seven are in the Early Years class; where the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is appropriate to their developmental stage. Two children are by age in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By seeking and acting on advice, the teacher has ensured the organisation of the classroom reflects closely the needs of individuals with, for example, picture symbols to indicate individual schedules, work stations for those who need reduced distraction and floor space for therapy and play sessions. All children benefit from participation in these activities and group sessions. The teacher and support assistants know each child well and adapt accordingly, such as offering a choice between two objects for one child to point to while expecting others to say which of all the objects they prefer. All members of the team skilfully support and manage the children using praise, encouragement, signing and symbols to gain and keep the children's attention. As a result, children participate and make good progress, especially in coping with being with others, taking turns and responding to different experiences and stimuli. Some are starting to make marks, write their name and count objects correctly. The dialogue in home/school diaries, along with the observations and annotated photographs in each child's My

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Learning Journal, forms a good record of experiences and progress over time. There is scope to identify even more precisely the learning steps and to fine tune the teaching accordingly.

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

Sixth form

Parents and carers appreciate the strong curricular focus on preparation for life after leaving Sandside. Evidence from monitoring and discussion points to much good teaching, effective team work and wide range of experiences which ensure pupils are motivated and encouraged to become increasingly independent. As a consequence, pupils often do really well personally, travelling alone to work placements which staff tailor carefully to the needs of individuals, and gaining Duke of Edinburgh's awards. Some pupils excel in particular aspects, such as running, sparked by experiences provided by the school. Data from assessments show that pupils' progress is satisfactory overall with headroom for improvement across the curriculum, especially in basic mathematics and science. Work in pupils' books shows some pupils make only small advances but that they try hard and often produce good quality pieces related to work experiences. The temporary accommodation at Ulverston Victoria High School has limited space for pupils to socialise and there is no access for pupils in wheelchairs. Nevertheless, pupils are enjoying and benefiting from their contact with and mentoring by sixth formers from the high school. The leader of the sixth form has a sound grasp of appropriate developments to meet the changing needs of pupils. He is looking to ways to provide more teaching by subject specialists and to add to the growing range of accredited programmes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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Views of parents and carers

The rate of response of parents and carers was broadly average for special schools. Not all who responded felt able to answer every question and several sent letters to explain why and to give additional comments. All agree that the school keeps their children safe and that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. A few wrote to praise the care and teamwork to support children with complex behavioural needs. A small number of parents and carers disagreed in relation to 10 of the 13 questions. They raised concerns about whether their children are making enough progress, the support for them to help their children at home, how well the school meets their children's particular needs and how well the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The essence of these concerns is similar to two of the aspects that the inspectors looked at in detail. The inspectors also looked carefully at other areas where parents and carers showed some dissatisfaction. The findings are given in different sections of the report and in the areas for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandside Lodge 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 31 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	21	68	7	23	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	71	8	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	52	11	35	2	6	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	55	10	32	1	3	3	10
The teaching is good at this school	20	65	6	19	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	52	9	29	4	13	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	48	13	42	0	0	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)	15	48	9	29	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	65	6	19	2	6	2	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	61	9	29	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	48	12	39	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	15	48	10	32	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	58	10	32	1	3	2	6

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 Sandside Lodge School, Ulverston, LA12 9EF

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when inspectors visited your school to see how well you are doing. It made us smile to see you older ones had decided to call your new home Hogwarts! I know many of you were anxious about all the changes at Sandside but I could see that you have all made the best of it. Well done!

Sandside is a satisfactory school. That means there are some good aspects but also some areas where things could be better. Since my visit in October, Mrs Mitchell and all the staff have put more things in place to help them to help you. It was good to hear some of you are getting better at spelling and working out new words now you are having sessions about letters and sounds. Some of you are also doing really well in signing and using picture cues to help you speak with one another. I saw how you older ones had used them in your presentation to students at Ulverston Victoria High School. The staff take really good care of you and help you to do as much as possible by yourself. Their support in the classrooms also helps you to learn and to improve your work. Over the year, there is a lot going on at Sandside inside and out. I hope you found the post box on your walk and your plants are growing well!

These are some of the things I have asked the governing body and all the staff to do to make Sandside even better.

- Make sure that they make learning as easy as possible for you by breaking tasks into tiny steps and celebrating and sharing your successes.
- Help all the staff to know exactly how best to support you.
- Make the best possible use of time, people and space so that you can do the very best you can in all subjects and topics. You can help by giving your ideas!

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector

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