

Westhaven School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109406
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	356533
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jackie Waters-Dewhurst
Headteacher	Mrs Cathryn Hill
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed the teaching of 12 teachers. They held meetings or telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, the chair of the parent-teacher association, the deputy headteacher of a local partnership school, and groups of pupils. They also observed the school's work, including a meeting with parents, an assembly, and break and lunch times. Inspectors also looked at a range of evidence, including data on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, minutes of meetings and information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Questionnaire responses from 30 parents and carers, 77 pupils and 25 staff were also analysed.

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

- The attainment and rate of progress of different groups of pupils, particularly of those with needs on the autistic spectrum.
- The consistency of teaching in classes across the school and how well assessment information is used to plan lessons that ensure the needs of all pupils are met.
- The impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism and its partnership work on extending the curriculum.
- The success of the leadership in sustaining the school's outstanding performance as reported by the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Westhaven School provides education for pupils whom it describes as having a range of 'complex barriers to learning'. Most pupils have either moderate learning difficulties or needs on the autistic spectrum, although a small number have additional medical or physical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the majority are boys. Almost all are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. Pupils are drawn from the catchment area of Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset. The school roll and the proportion of pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum have increased in recent years. The school's extended provision includes a service which offers support to parents and a range of after-school clubs which are managed by the school. The school was granted specialist status for business and enterprise in September 2007 and became a foundation trust school in March 2008.

The school has gained several awards in recognition of its work, including the National Standard for Enterprise, Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark, Activemark and the Royal Horticultural Society's outstanding neighbourhood award and silver medal for garden design.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Westhaven school provides an outstanding education. Pupils are respected as individuals and benefit from a very high standard of care, guidance and support. They make outstanding progress and leave school as confident young people, having gained an impressive range of qualifications. In the words of one parent, 'My child is making wonderful progress both socially and academically, in spite of having very individual needs.'

Key to the school's success is the commitment of staff at all levels to continually improve pupils' learning. Exceptionally strong links have been established with other partners which make a significant contribution to the outstanding curriculum. The school's business and enterprise specialism is used very effectively to develop pupils' independence and to provide excellent vocational courses. Excellent links have been established with parents and carers and many are actively involved in supporting the school's work.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils leave school having gained an excellent understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle and how to play their part in wider society. They are particularly well prepared for future employment or further training through taking the vocational courses on offer. The stimulating curriculum and the ample opportunities for taking part in school life and in the wider community help to promote pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and it is good overall. High expectations and the effective use of praise and encouragement help pupils to try hard. Teachers are generally adapting well to the increased number of pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum. Individual tuition and work in small groups is very effective in developing pupils' communication and their social use of language. However, some of the strategies used in these sessions are not applied consistently in classes across the school, which occasionally leads to pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum becoming anxious or making slower progress. Good systems are in place for assessing pupils' progress. In a few lessons, this information is not used to set precise targets which support small steps in learning, particularly in developing the skills of pupils who are at the early stages of writing.

The headteacher and her team of experienced senior leaders provide excellent leadership for the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development based on effective systems of self-evaluation. The school's thorough analysis of information on pupils' progress shows that all groups of pupils make equally outstanding progress. While teaching has not yet adapted fully to meet the changing needs of pupils, senior leaders have recently introduced a new system for monitoring teaching and learning, that is providing more detailed information, on pupils' learning

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across the school. The full benefits of this system have yet to be realised, particularly to ensure that strategies for helping pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum are used consistently. However, the school's sustained high performance since the last inspection and the deployment of resources to achieve excellent value for money demonstrate good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring strategies to promote the learning of pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum are used more widely in classes across the school
 - ensuring greater consistency in the use of assessment information to set more precise targets, particularly to help pupils develop their writing.
- Use the recently revised system for monitoring teaching and learning to share outstanding practice and to ensure it is evident in a higher proportion of classes across the school.
- Given the school's strong capacity for improvement, it should be possible to implement and see the impact of these changes during the summer and autumn terms of 2011.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The achievement and enjoyment of learning of all groups of pupils are outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Each year, the large majority of pupils gain several passes in a wide range of subjects at GCSE and Entry level and almost all leave with additional vocational qualifications. A few more-capable pupils gain higher grade GCSE passes in, for example, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Pupils' learning and progress in the classroom is good, and often outstanding. Pupils have very good opportunities to learn in a practical way, for example when they grow and sell plants as part of the horticulture course, use games to reinforce learning in mathematics and conduct scientific experiments. In personal, social and health education, pupils learn to discuss topical issues in a small group and to give presentations to the class, which very effectively develops their speaking and listening skills.

All aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding. The school is extremely successful at developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. In the words of one pupil, 'I used to be so stressed I couldn't stay in lessons but this school has helped me so much and made me the person I am. I can now learn.' Pupils are very proud of their achievements and are pleased to talk to visitors about their successes. They learn to make decisions through the school council and they play a major part in the local community, especially through horticultural projects and competitions. The excellent development of pupils' personal skills, combined with their good attendance and broad academic qualifications, prepares them exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

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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	2
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 establish very positive relationships with pupils. A calm atmosphere and clear classroom routines encourage pupils to settle quickly to their work. Questioning is generally used well to ensure pupils understand the task and a good variety of activities help learning to move at a brisk pace. In the best lessons, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this to deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers' understanding of strategies to teach pupils with needs on the autistic spectrum is not yet developed fully and the school has embarked on a programme of training. Teaching assistants provide good support, especially when leading small groups or providing individual support. Occasionally their skills are underused when their role in the lesson is not sharply defined. Assessment information is generally used well to set targets and to support learning. It is particularly effective in contributing to pupils' successes in examinations at Key Stage 4. In addition, there are very good examples of pupils being involved in assessing each other's skills, for example in physical education. In a few lessons, assessment information is not used to set sharp enough targets and marking does not give sufficient help to pupils on how they might improve their work.

The curriculum is a major factor in promoting the pupils' outstanding outcomes. It provides a very broad range of experiences and draws extensively on partnership links

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with other schools, colleges and the local community. It has been adapted extremely well to meet the needs of all groups of pupils and includes both higher level GCSE courses and pre-entry level and entry level courses to recognise the development of pupils' independence and social skills. The school's own provision is extended through link courses at the local college in, for example, animal care and vehicle maintenance. The business and enterprise specialism has been used extremely well to establish outstanding provision for horticulture and to develop pupils' independence. Pupils' involvement in growing and selling plants in a real commercial environment is an impressive feature of the school's work. Pupils have also learnt to set up their own company, making and selling healthy drinks. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of trips and visits and the popular after-school clubs and sporting activities.

The school provides an exceptionally safe and caring environment. Pupils report the absence of bullying and that they can talk to staff if they have any concerns. Pupils receive excellent support, which includes the school's learning mentor and health care assistant, and links with other professionals, for example speech and language therapists, a dietician and careers advisor. Transition arrangements for when pupils join and leave the school are very thorough and supported by the work of the parent support adviser. Staff have received appropriate training to ensure that the few incidents of anxious behaviour are managed in a calm and understanding manner. Thorough procedures for managing absence have been successful in maintaining a rate of attendance which is above the national average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders are highly successful in driving improvement and maintaining the school's high performance. Staff appreciate that they are consulted and involved in decision-making, and their morale is high. The school has adapted well to the increase in its roll and to the admission of pupils with a broader range of special educational needs. The outstanding links with parents and carers include parent workshops, a scheme for parents to visit the school and help pupils with their reading and a thriving parent-teacher association. Equality of opportunity is promoted highly effectively and supported by the intelligent use of data to measure pupils' progress and to monitor the performance and participation of different groups. The recent introduction of a wider range of examination courses has ensured that all groups continue to achieve extremely well. Safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough and meet all the requirements. The school has good plans to promote community cohesion. Excellent links have been established with the local community and international links are being developed with a

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school in India. Links with the groups representing the diverse cultural and religious traditions in the wider United Kingdom are less developed. The governing body gives a good level of support and challenge to the school and ensures that all statutory requirements are met.

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold extremely positive views about the school's work. They are particularly pleased with how well the school meets the individual needs of children and how it helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Parents and carers also feel well informed about their children's progress and appreciate how well pupils are prepared for leaving school. A very small number of parents raised concerns about pupils' behaviour and a few would like more information about how they can help with their children's learning. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour was outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. The school is currently reviewing its arrangements for target setting to ensure parents and carers are more closely involved in their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westhaven 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 82 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	70	6	26	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	83	3	13	1	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	52	10	43	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	57	9	39	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	74	4	17	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	57	6	26	2	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	43	13	57	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)	12	52	10	43	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	48	7	30	2	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	57	6	26	2	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	74	2	9	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	83	4	17	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westhaven School, Weston-super-Mare BS23 4UT

Recently I visited your school with another inspector. We enjoyed our visit very much and appreciated the welcome we received. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to us about your work and life at school. We also talked to the teachers and other adults connected with the school, visited lessons, looked at your work and took account of the views of your parents and carers to find out how the school is doing. Here are the main points.

- Your school is outstanding and provides you with lots of exciting things to do in school and in the wider community.
- You really enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is excellent.
- You make outstanding progress with your learning and gain very good qualifications, which prepare you extremely well for when you leave school.
- The school's focus on developing your business and enterprise skills, especially through the horticulture courses, is very effective in developing your skills for future work.
- The school helps you develop an excellent understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle.
- Adults run the school exceptionally well and make sure you get superb care and support.
- The school has outstanding links with your parents and carers, who are extremely pleased with how the school helps you learn.

I have asked the school to do a few things to help it get even better.

- Make sure teachers give more help to some of you who have difficulty understanding and using language.
- Set learning targets in smaller steps, especially to help you improve your writing.
- Get teachers to share the really good ideas for helping you to learn so that more lessons are of the highest quality.

You can help by always trying your best and by talking to teachers about things you do not understand. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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