

St Luke's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117671
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358172
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Upham
Headteacher	Paul Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
School address	Crouch Hall Lane Redbourn St Albans AL3 7ET
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work including approximately 10 hours of teaching and they saw 15 teachers teaching. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including a parent governor, and staff. They scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, 74 parental questionnaires, 120 pupils' questionnaires and 36 staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

This school offers education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties many of whom have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and sensory impairments. The school is also responsible for the educational provision at Forest House Education Centre, a children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) centre based at a hospital approximately 12 miles away. There were 14 pupils on roll at the centre during the inspection. The school hosts a specialist resourced provision, offering integrated experiences for pupils on roll at a local school for the deaf. Their timetable is shared between St Luke's lessons and specialist lessons provided by staff from the other school. Nearly all pupils have statements of special educational needs. Over two thirds of the pupils are boys, one third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. A very small proportion of pupils do not have English as their first language and over three quarters of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has specialist status for science and humanities with a rural dimension and has recently achieved anti-bullying accreditation and has been successfully reassessed for the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school that has continued to improve through strong leadership and by creative adaptation of the curriculum to meet the widening range of pupils' needs. This is true both in the main school and in the Forest House Education Centre. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. The organisation of classes and curriculum help pupils to mature into considerate and confident young people who are becoming increasingly independent and ready for the next stage in their education.
- Most students including those at Forest House make good progress during their time at the school. Careful analysis of what pupils are achieving, alongside high expectations demonstrated by most staff, enables pupils to succeed. Forest House is particularly successful in helping pupils return to mainstream schools or colleges.
- Senior staff recognise that there are a few pupils who are not achieving as well as others. Recently, they have successfully improved the progress made by girls, particularly in mathematics. Through changes to teaching arrangements they have also helped pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to make better progress. This year, higher levels of accreditation have been introduced for the more able pupils and the school has begun further adaptations to the curriculum for pupils with more complex behavioural, emotional and social needs.
- Teaching is good and inspectors observed some exemplary lessons where pupils were enthused and challenged by creative teachers. Thorough planning is consistent across the school, however, in a few lessons the levels of challenge and support are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of the

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pupils and, therefore, they do not learn as much as they could. Pupils are given opportunities to learn and use communication, including reading and writing skills, across the curriculum but the approach is not consistent and in some lessons there are missed opportunities to help pupils practise these skills.

- Good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to behave appropriately and the vast majority of pupils behave well. The few pupils who find behaving appropriately difficult are given high levels of additional support and their behaviour is improving. Disruption for others is kept to a minimum by good staff intervention; however, a few parents and carers as well as a few pupils are concerned about instances of inappropriate behaviour.
- The senior team and the governing body are highly committed to ensuring the curriculum and teaching arrangements meet the needs of all the pupils at the school. The senior team have tackled identified weaknesses effectively and have continued to improve the progress made by all pupils. Detailed monitoring provides a great deal of information but this is not always analysed as efficiently as it could be. Ongoing work to adapt the levels of support and curriculum for a few pupils who are struggling more than others has yet to result in consistent improvements in their behaviour or academic progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' communication and literacy skills by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning with each other and staff during lessons
 - ensuring a consistent approach to reading (including the use of phonics) across the curriculum
 - increasing the opportunities for independent writing and writing for different purposes across the curriculum.
- Sharpen the evaluation of school arrangements by developing pupil and group profiles so that they bring together progress data, including that about social skills, with the information about what support or changes in the curriculum have been made.

Main report

Strong leadership supports a very positive ethos where individuals are valued and where hard work and success are celebrated by the whole school community. This good leadership, teaching and carefully planned additional support ensures that most pupils make at least good progress. Through good teaching, supported by an increasingly personalised curriculum, the school has helped to improve the progress of individual pupils during their time at the school. The specialist subjects enhance

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the curriculum and the rural dimension including animal care provides interesting opportunities for pupils to take on increasing levels of responsibility and learn to care for other creatures. Nearly one third of pupils make much better than expected progress in English, mathematics and science over the time they are at the school. Children who are looked after by the local authority are some of those making the best progress in relation to their starting points. The small minority of pupils who do not make as much progress are some of the higher attaining pupils and those with more complex behavioural needs.

During the inspection, pupils made good and sometimes better progress in lessons where activities were extremely well matched to their levels of understanding. For example, this was the case where activities were based on learning from first-hand experiences, where teachers gave pupils the opportunity to explore things for themselves, make their own decisions and talk about their learning with other pupils or staff. In the best lessons, there were clear links planned for developing communication skills regardless of the subject being taught. Where learning and progress were satisfactory, there was often more focus on answering direct questions from the teacher which did not promote thinking at different levels. The school's commitment to ensuring pupils' achievements are recognised has led to an ever-widening range of accredited courses being followed. The recent introduction of GCSE English has raised expectations and helped to increase the progress some pupils make in this area. At the end of Year 11, pupils who take art and design GCSE are particularly successful. Pupils who start at the school near the end of Key Stage 2 make good progress in relation to the time they have been at the school.

At Forest House Education Centre, staff gain a quick understanding of the levels at which pupils are working and effectively strive to enable them to build their knowledge and skills from these individual levels. Work scrutiny shows good levels of progress for individual pupils within the core areas. This is supported by helpful marking which offers pupils a clear indication of how they can improve further. Due to the short term nature of education placements at the centre, the priority for learning is in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, pupils also have access to a range of different subjects including music, drama and art. Close working arrangements with health professionals ensure every pupil has a suitable balance of education and therapy. Effective partnership between Forest House Education Centre and the Hertfordshire Reintegration Team has supported pupils who were previously struggling to access education to return to mainstream schools or colleges successfully.

The school community fosters a sense of belonging both for pupils on the roll of the school and those from the local school for the deaf. Pupils gain a good understanding of each other's needs and this helps to create a very supportive atmosphere where pupils are confident to help each other. Relationships, based on mutual respect between staff and pupils, are extremely positive throughout the school and Forest House. Nearly all parents and carers believe their children enjoy school. The pupil questionnaires show that the majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and this was also the feeling of those who spoke to inspectors throughout the two days. Some of

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the older pupils clearly explained their appreciation of the support they had received from staff and were adamant that staff work successfully to ensure everyone has equal opportunity to access a range of experiences and succeed in their work.

Teachers are using assessment information more effectively when planning their lessons than was the case during the last inspection, thus helping more pupils to make good progress. For some lessons, pupils are grouped by the current level of their work but the groupings change so that pupils can move into other groups and receive more challenging work when appropriate. Teaching is usually engaging and in the best lessons, in addition to the subject content, communication including literacy is practised well by using a range of interesting situations. In these lessons, teachers are highly skilled at adapting their questions to meet the different levels of pupils' understanding and give plenty of opportunity for them to collaborate and 'have a go' for themselves. In the very best lessons, teachers model language and literacy effectively but this is not consistent across the school. Teachers do not use a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and there are missed opportunities in lessons to promote writing for different purposes. The effectiveness of support staff is usually good in lessons. In the best lessons, their role is well planned by the teacher and support staff are very aware of when to allow pupils to try things for themselves and when to offer additional support to help move their learning forward. There are a few examples of teaching not being as effective as it should be. During the inspection, this occurred when the teacher had not given enough consideration to what pupils would learn and the focus of the lesson was unclear. Similarly, in these lessons the range of resources being used to support learning was limited and the language levels used by teachers and support staff did not match the level of pupils' understanding well enough.

Over time, pupils respond well to the behaviour strategies used by the school and they learn to be highly supportive of one another. There are many examples of exemplary progress made by pupils who have had difficulties with their social skills when they arrived at the school. There are a few pupils for whom behaving appropriately is still a challenge. The school is currently changing arrangements so that the curriculum and organisation of the school timetable is more supportive of these pupils' needs and enhances opportunities for promoting moral and social development. Whilst they recognise that learning can occasionally be disrupted by the behaviour of a few pupils, most parents and carers believe behaviour at the school is good. Pupils feel safe and bullying has reduced in the last few years. The remaining occasions of bullying that do occur are dealt with effectively by staff. The staff and pupils believe that the all-age tutor groups or 'family groups' are an instrumental factor in improving relationships between pupils. Inspectors were impressed by the levels of empathy and support amongst pupils they observed during the inspection. Alternative curriculum days each half term extend pupils' understanding of different cultures and inspectors enjoyed observing the Carnival day during the inspection.

The senior team monitor pupils' social and academic progress carefully and this helps to identify where additional support is required. They pay diligent attention to

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keeping pupils safe while at school. The information gathered by the leadership team and the governing body has increased considerably over the last few years but is not always brought together efficiently to provide sharp evaluation. Changes in social or academic progress made by the pupils are not easily linked to specific interventions or changes in provision. The governing body provides a highly effective level of challenge to ensure pupils have equal opportunities to experiences and success. Its members have worked closely with a team of staff to develop an effective teaching and learning policy and help to monitor the effectiveness of the policy in action. Similarly, careful scrutiny of behavioural incidents, sanctions and rewards helps to ensure the school is improving practice. The leadership team constantly seeks ways to improve the outcomes for pupils both at the school and Forest House Education Centre. To this end, they have created highly effective partnerships with other schools, colleges and health professionals, to enhance the curriculum on offer to the pupils. The combination of these factors demonstrate the school has the capacity to continue to build on their good practice and improve further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Luke's 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 133 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	38	51	33	45	1	1	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	36	49	34	46	1	1	2	3
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	38	51	31	42	1	1	2	3
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	36	49	34	46	1	1	3	4
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	40	54	31	42	1	1	2	3
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	40	54	31	42	0	0	1	1
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	25	34	40	54	4	5	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	19	26	38	51	8	11	1	1
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	31	42	34	46	4	5	1	1
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	46	31	42	2	3	4	5
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	34	46	31	42	4	5	3	4
Q12 The school is well led and managed	33	45	37	50	1	1	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Luke's School, St Albans, AL3 7ET

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. We enjoyed our visit and especially observing the Carnival day.

- You attend a good school that helps you to become confident and more independent so that you are ready for the next stage of your education.
- You make good progress in lessons and when you struggle, you are given the help you need to succeed.
- Your headteacher and other staff recognise that some of you could achieve more with the right support and they have introduced some new ideas to help you do this. Perhaps you could offer some ideas as well.
- Recent changes have helped many of you to have a happier time at school and the family groups make sure you get to know pupils from different age groups as well as your own. We were both impressed by how supportive you are of one another.
- Nearly all of you enjoy coming to school and you are encouraged by the good teaching in most lessons. We have asked the school to make sure you are given more opportunities to learn to communicate including reading and writing in lessons across the curriculum.
- Most of you behave very well although a few of you find this difficult. You are already beginning to benefit from the changes being made to help you. We were pleased to hear from older pupils at the school about the effective support they received to help them through difficult times.
- The headteacher and staff at the school want the best for you and are constantly trying to improve the progress you make. We have asked them to find more efficient ways of checking what works best to help you make the most progress.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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