

Isebrook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 122157

Local Authority Northamptonshire

Inspection number 359176

Inspection dates9–10 June 2011Reporting inspectorLucie Calow

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

Type of school Special
School category Community
Age range of pupils 11–19
Gender of pupils Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll 108
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form 13

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Carol Coe

HeadteacherPeter HenshawDate of previous school inspection5 December 2007School addressEastleigh Road

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed and other activities, in which 13 teachers were seen, took place. Meetings were held with students, members of the school leadership team and other key staff and with representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at arrangements for safeguarding, a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, progress tracking data, a range of policies and local authority reports. They analysed 24 parent and carer questionnaires and considered 53 student and 52 staff questionnaires.

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

- What rate of progress do students make from their individual starting points and how does this lead to appropriate qualifications?
- How successful has the sixth form been in securing high quality provision and outcomes for its students?
- How effectively does the school evaluate its own strengths and areas for development in order to bring about improvements?

Information about the school

Isebrook provides special school education to students with significant to severe learning disabilities. As such it is smaller than most secondary schools. It holds specialist school status for cognition and learning. All students have a statement of special educational needs representing a wide-ranging population including severe learning disability, autistic spectrum disorder, social and emotional difficulties, challenging behaviour and moderate learning disabilities. The school makes a specialist provision for some of its autistic students and many more who are taught within class groups also have autism. School numbers have increased each year since the previous inspection. There are more boys than girls with approximately one third being girls. More students than average start or leave the school at times other than at the beginning or end of a key stage. Most students are of White British heritage with a small proportion from minority ethnic heritage and a very few who speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals (approximately three times the national average). The school has achieved a Healthy Schools award, Investors in People, a Basic Skills Quality mark and an Active Sports mark.

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

1

Main findings

This outstanding school provides an extremely personalised education for its students built around their highly specific individual needs. Students make outstanding progress because a very personalised curriculum is matched with equally high quality care, guidance and support. As a consequence, they are quickly enabled to engage with learning and go on to make clear academic progress. Students meet, and many exceed, challenging school targets. This is especially true for the significant number of students who join the school part way through a year or key stage following a disrupted experience at previous schools and who have been excluded, or at risk of exclusion. Isebrook offers a wide range of accredited courses suited to the varying ability levels of students and frequently reviews them in light of individual needs and talents. The most academically able students meet with success in some GCSE courses such as in art and science. While the accreditation currently available is suitable for students engaged on them, the school does not yet provide this high level accreditation in all subjects.

Inspectors observed students to be polite, attentive in lessons and well-behaved including those with social and emotional difficulties. Good behaviour in lessons is achieved through effective personal relationships with adults. Some students at Isebrook exhibit challenging behaviour and the school has good strategies to meet these needs. There is some tension between effective strategies to meet the particular needs of individuals and the need for consistent procedures and responses for the management of behaviour across the school community. The school is addressing these issues, for example by providing a 'share box' and 'anti-bullying team' as a means of ensuring open dialogue about issues which cause concern. Some teachers have developed effective merit systems to recognise and reward good behaviour, effort and achievement in their lessons and in marking work. These complement school-wide procedures. However, they are not consistent across subjects.

There are striking examples of how motivated and enthusiastic students make a notable contribution to the school and wider community. These include the frankness with which school council members discuss issues, giving balanced views and strongly held opinions; the impression students make on local employers through work experience placements; enthusiastic engagement with special events, and support for each other in taking on personal challenge. Students have made an excellent contribution to the development and presentation of school grounds.

Attendance is below average for the student population as a whole. However, many students attend very well and a significant number improve during their time at the school. The school has excellent systems for engaging with parents and carers including over issues of attendance. Reasons for absence are scrutinised on a very regular basis.

Senior leaders are meticulous in their approach to monitoring and analysing school data and self-evaluation. Quite rightly, the school uses a number of systems to judge the

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

progress its students make and brings them together so that a complete and full overview is secured. On the occasions when some variation has been identified between groups in the amount of progress being made the school takes effective steps to close the gap. For example, it was found that boys made less progress than girls in literacy and so a programme of reading and spelling support was implemented to raise attainment of all, and particularly of boys. Senior leaders are well aware both of the usefulness of group data analysis and the need to consider individual student circumstance in assessing how effectively the school is meeting student need or what more could be done.

The school's outstanding capacity to sustain improvement is evident in the improvements it has made since the time of its previous inspection. For example, it now provides an outstanding curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support to students. At the time of the previous inspection the sixth form was at a pilot stage and during the intervening three years it has been well established and is an effective, good quality resource. This is clear evidence of outstanding leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that effective responses to individual behavioural needs are fully understood and that systems for more general behaviour management are consistently applied.
- Secure the best possible results for all students by:
 - continuing to review the range of accreditation available to students especially those who are most able
 - accelerating the rate at which individual barriers to high levels of attendance are overcome.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In line with their special educational needs and learning disabilities, students enter the school with attainment well below the national average. A significant number also enter the school having experienced turbulence in their previous education and, for a very few, the school has needed to make extremely individualised provision including dedicated spaces and staffing. Some students reach average attainment in some subjects and the vast majority make good or better academic progress against challenging, school-based targets. This represents outstanding progress overall because of low starting points.

Teachers secure good and outstanding progress in lessons by planning interesting activities which engage students' interest and by stretching students through questioning and individual challenge and support. Staff know their students well and develop effective relationships with them. These effective personal relationships are key to the progress students make in both their academic and social and emotional development. Students say they value active lessons the most and these are also effective at re-engaging those who have been disaffected in the past.

Students make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular their social development is strong and spirituality is encouraged through arts and creativity across the curriculum. Students know right from wrong and embrace new experiences with enthusiasm, for example the off-site sports event observed by

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

inspectors. Assemblies make good use of outside speakers to broaden students' understanding of diversity.

It is because students develop an understanding of right and wrong that they are concerned about incidents of poor behaviour and are rightly engaging with a school wide effort to improve behaviour further. They report feeling safe in school and confident that staff deal with any issues and that they know who to go to if they need help.

The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is well supported by the curriculum for personal, social and health education and by the extent of physical activity and opportunity offered by the school. The latter include swimming for students in Years 7 and 8 and 'warm water swimming' for the small number of students who require it. Students have a clear understanding of a healthy diet and are taught about the dangers of smoking and drugs and they value relationships education. On-site nutrition is adequate.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school community as seen through their involvement in developing school grounds and the new build. They are confident and proud to have done this. They value and engage enthusiastically with off-site activities. Their contributions, for example on work experience placements, are highly valued. They are able to contribute to their own learning reviews through person-centred planning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning			
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	2		
Pupils' behaviour			
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles			
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	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.

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

How effective is the provision?

The large majority of teaching is good and much of it is outstanding. Students with both moderate and severe learning disabilities are very well challenged in lessons by teachers with sound subject knowledge. High expectations of individual progress are evident in classrooms.

In the best lessons activities are stimulating and well structured to lead students thinking on. Delivery is well paced and students are enthused to take part. Good use of assessment is most clearly evident in how teachers adapt activities and learning levels to suit the needs and abilities of their students. Resources are interesting and support staff are effectively deployed. Written use of assessment in planning and in marking work is more variable with some teachers providing helpful comments to deepen students' understanding of what they need to improve and others only providing annotation for adults.

The curriculum is well balanced, broad, extensive and exceptionally flexible around specific student needs. This is reflected in individual learning plans. A very strong work related learning programme has an exceptional impact on student opportunities. The curriculum brings together a diverse range of experience and individual requirements such as therapy and vocational courses and provides students with many memorable experiences. Further opportunities for enrichment are supported through the extended day; they include after-school clubs for sports, cookery and information and communication technology (ICT) through which social skills are developed further. The school has effective partnership arrangements, for example with a local college, in delivering vocational courses.

The level of care, guidance and support available to students is outstanding because provision is so personally tailored to meet individual needs. The intensive needs of specific students, for example, those with autism or physical disability, are met with personalised packages of support. Students are well supported when they join the school and in preparing to leave. Highly personalised provision is balanced with open opportunities to all, for example, nurse drop-in sessions.

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?

Extremely strong leadership and management have brought about several improvements to the school. This has included establishing an effective sixth form and improving on recommendations from the school's previous inspection report. The school adapts key areas of provision in response to the frequently changing needs and numbers of the

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

school's population. As a consequence the school has an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

The meticulous way in which senior leaders and managers use and scrutinise data is particularly impressive and thorough. They maintain a focus on bringing about improved opportunity and resources for their students. For example, specialist school funding has secured a new improved building, additional communication resources particularly for students with autism or a severe learning disability, and targeted literacy resources.

The work of the governing body to support and add challenge to the school is outstanding because it is thorough, the governing body is well organised and includes members with a range of highly appropriate skills. Governors are frequent visitors who know and understand the school's work keenly. The work of committees is instrumental in identifying key issues within the school and bringing them to the attention of the governing body as a whole.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough. Policies and procedures provide a clear and detailed framework to staff and extended training is timely and established. Lead staff are very effective in identifying risks and taking follow-up action. The school works effectively with partner agencies and issues on how to stay safe are built into the curriculum. Risk assessments are robust.

The school has developed highly effective systems for engaging with parents and carers. It has clear systems for sharing information including by text and email, through review processes and through the work of the parent support worker. Liaison between school and home has had a clear impact on students' development and well-being, with some students improving their attendance as a result and a high level of engagement with annual review processes.

In line with the highly personalised approach which marks out the curriculum and care, guidance and support, the effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination is outstanding. This is because all students are enabled to make good and better progress from their individual starting points. The school reviews all of its data closely to ensure that all groups of students do well and to tackle any emerging issues which might suggest a variance from expectation. The school can point to striking examples of meeting the very high and intense needs of students who have been excluded or at risk of exclusion from previous schools.

Good strategies to develop community cohesion are based on solid planning and a clear understanding of the school's own context. The school makes particular arrangements to ensure that students are able to take part in available activities regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. The school is a frequent venue for many community activities. Diversity awareness is raised, for example, through assemblies and the school has established three international links.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
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	1	
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		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

Sixth form

Isebrook sixth form is housed in a new extension and the facilities are spacious and provide an appropriate environment for the development of students' social skills as well as specific course skills. For example there is a new hairdressing and beauty area with sinks and seating so that qualified staff can teach this vocational course. All students who enter the sixth form currently come through the main body of the school and are usually students with higher needs or who lack the confidence to progress to college immediately following Key Stage 4. Most do make a successful transition to college by the end of Year 13.

The curriculum is personalised so that students can follow course elements of particular interest as well as maintaining key skills in English. Courses are structured so that they promote good progress. For example, students who leave Key Stage 4 with entry level one qualifications follow entry level three courses in their chosen areas. Bespoke courses such as equine skills and driving are sourced for students with specific needs. Students are encouraged to become independent and confident young adults with due regard to responsibilities such as supporting younger students during off-site events. They follow an enriching number of activities off-site which are often developed in partnership with other providers such as local colleges and other schools.

The sixth form leader has worked with the senior leadership team to establish a very effective provision since the initial pilot scheme. This represents outstanding leadership and management. Systems are established to monitor how well students are doing including their level of engagement. New initiatives for improvement such as the hairdressing and beauty salon are focused on improving opportunity for further education and work after students have left. Attention to progress is given an appropriately high profile incorporating social and personal skills and relevant accreditation. Students are involved in decision-making.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form		
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2	
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2	
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1	

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children are happy at school and that good teaching results in good progress about which they are well informed. Inspectors found that progress is outstanding because academic progress is accompanied by progress in key personal and social skills. A few parents do not feel the school takes enough account of their suggestions or concerns. An equally small number of parents disagree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour or that the school encourages a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found behaviour to be good overall but have asked the school to make some improvements. Healthy lifestyles are most effectively encouraged through physical activity and through personal and social health education and less so through nutrition.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Isebrook 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
My child enjoys school	11	46	13	54	0	0	0	0	
The school keeps my child safe	15	63	9	38	0	0	0	0	
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0	
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	50	12	50	0	0	0	0	
The teaching is good at this school	13	57	10	43	0	0	0	0	
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	42	13	54	1	4	0	0	
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	25	16	67	2	8	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)	6	25	15	63	1	4	0	0	
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	71	6	25	1	4	0	0	
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	46	11	46	2	8	0	0	
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	42	12	50	2	8	0	0	
The school is led and managed effectively	11	48	11	48	0	0	1	4	
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	63	9	38	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	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 suc	ccess of a pupil in their learning,
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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: 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.

■ 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.



13 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Isebrook School, Kettering, NN15 6PT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited your school. Thank you for contributing to the inspection by completing you questionnaires, and to school council members for meeting with me and to those of you who spoke to us during the inspection. This letter is to let you know what we found.

We are delighted to let you know that you go to an outstanding school where you make very good progress indeed. This is because your school and staff give you the individual help that you need. Changes are often made to what you are taught and how you are taught it, so that you are able to make the best progress possible. Your teachers do a good job and they are knowledgeable about their subjects and how to help you to learn. Mr Henshaw and senior staff look closely at all the information they have about your progress so that they know how well you are doing and how to help you do even better. There are lots of courses and examinations you can take. We think that those of you who do well at GCSE would benefit from having even more high level qualifications available to you.

We were particularly impressed by the way you contribute to your school and the local community. We found you to be polite and well behaved. You told us that you feel safe in school but that you are concerned about the behaviour of some students. Some of you also told us that you do not enjoy coming to school. We found that the school has good ways of securing good behaviour and that there is more work to do to make it even better. Some of you do not come to school as often as you should and that means you miss out on the good things the school has to offer. Some of you come to Isebrook more often than you have been to other schools and we are pleased about that.

We want your school to become even better and so we have asked your headteacher to

- make sure that there is a good balance between fair rules and having the particular help you need to behave well
- make sure you get the best results possible by thinking about the examinations you can take and by making sure you all come to school as often as you should.

All of you can help too, by letting staff know what you think works really well and by listening carefully to their advice.

Yours sincerely

Lucie Calow

Lead inspector

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