

Friars School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130957
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	360174
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melvyn Kay
Headteacher	Lynne Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
School address	Friars Close Wellingborough NN8 2LA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons, conducted a learning walk in technology and saw 10 teachers teach. Meetings were held with key staff, a group of students and three members of the governing body. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at students' work, tracking data and various documents, including those relating to sports college status, policies to promote safeguarding, curriculum policies, and the minutes of staff and governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed questionnaire returns from staff, students and 43 parents and carers.

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

- Do teaching and the use of assessment ensure that all groups of students make similar progress in lessons, particularly in English and mathematics?
- How well are students guided and supported in lessons to promote their learning and personal development?
- What is the impact of partnerships and specialist sports college status on students' outcomes?
- How do middle leaders and governors form their own view of the effectiveness of provision and what is the impact of their monitoring on students' outcomes?
- Does examination success in the sixth form show a rising trend of performance?

Information about the school

This large special school takes students with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly due to moderate, severe and complex learning disabilities. A significant proportion have additional special education needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, physical disabilities, and speech language and communication difficulties. All students have statements of special educational needs. A very large majority of students are White British and there are very few who speak English as an additional language. An above-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes. A new deputy headteacher has recently been appointed and the leadership team has been re-organised to include phase leaders. A new Chair of the Governing Body and new parent governors have recently been appointed. In September 2009 the school was re-designated to cater for sixth form students. The school now has specialist sports college status. The school has achieved a number of awards including: Sportsmark, The Healthy Schools award, the Olympic and Paralympic 'Get Set Go' Partnership, the Careers Mark and the Eco-school bronze award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Friars School provides a good education for its students. Significant strengths in the school's provision are the outstanding care guidance and support, and its specialist provision for sports and strong partnerships. These make an extremely positive contribution to students' learning and well-being. As a result, students stay exceptionally safe and those with additional special educational needs make at least good and often outstanding progress in learning and personal development. Students' achievements in physical education are outstanding and they have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Parents and carers praise the work of the school. Many parents and carers said that they cannot thank the staff enough for all they are doing for their children, highlighting the good progress their children are making.

Students enter the school with very low levels of attainment due to the nature, severity and complexity of their special educational needs. It is, therefore, inappropriate to judge attainment against national expectations. Students make good progress overall in lessons as a result of mainly good or better teaching. Learning and progress seen in lessons during the inspection varied from satisfactory to outstanding. In the better lessons, teachers made good use of assessment in setting clear objectives for pupils to achieve and in matching learning tasks closely to different levels of ability. But this is not consistent in every lesson. Sometimes learning objectives are too vague and students of different abilities do the same learning task. The marking of students' work is also variable. All work is marked with ticks and positive comments, but students are not always informed of how to improve their work or their next steps to learning. Students with additional special educational needs make outstanding progress in communication and social interaction skills as a result of strong teamwork between staff, therapists and health professionals in implementing individual education plans. Students make at least good progress and often outstanding progress in work-related learning as a result of highly effective partnerships between the school and local businesses. Students in the sixth form are making good progress as a result of good teaching and strong partnerships with other sixth forms and colleges.

Good leadership and management have resulted in mostly accurate self-evaluation, firmly based on the regular monitoring of teaching and learning. This has led to clear priorities for development and good improvements in provision and students' achievements since the last inspection. This demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement. The governing body provide good support for staff, ensure legal requirements are met and hold the school to account for its work. However, their monitoring role and procedures for seeking the views of all parents and carers are not fully developed.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - students are always clear about what they are expected to achieve in lessons
 - lesson tasks are consistently matched to different learning needs
 - marking always informs students how to improve their work and their next steps in learning.
- Develop the strategic role of the members of the governing body by:
 - implementing a schedule of focused visits so they have their own view of the quality of the school's work
 - ensuring that they seek the views of all parents and carers and take these into account when holding the school to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' achievement is good and they greatly enjoy their learning, with nearly all attending school regularly. Students make good progress in lessons, remaining focused on their learning tasks and trying their best. They take great pride in their work and persist in the face of difficulty, particularly when tasks are not always matched closely enough to their needs or when, sometimes, they are not clear enough about what they are expected to achieve. The school's own detailed tracking data show that most students are on course to meet or exceed their challenging targets. The school's careful analysis of its data shows that there is some variation in the progress of different groups of students. Those with moderate learning difficulties, although making good progress, are not making as much progress as other groups in English. However, the gap in the progress of boys and girls is narrowing. All students with additional special educational needs make outstanding progress in social interaction and communication skills. They make at least good progress towards their individual targets: those with physical disabilities and speech language and communication difficulties make outstanding progress towards their targets. Students make good progress in basic skills as they move through the school. By Year 11, students gain a wide range of qualifications, including GCSE, certificates of achievement, and vocational qualifications from the Open College Network, adult literacy and numeracy certificates and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze and silver awards. A very large majority of students successfully complete their work experience and nearly all have gained places in further education or employment. Two students have made outstanding progress in work-related learning by gaining apprenticeships. All students leave Year 11 with three accredited qualifications in physical education, including sports leadership, as a result of the outstanding provision through the specialist sports college status. Sixth form students make equally good progress as students in the main school.

Students' behaviour is good overall and this has a positive impact on their learning in lessons. Given their broadly average attendance and good achievement, students are well prepared for the next stage of learning. Occasional incidents of disruption are managed effectively, with students responding well and quickly returning to their tasks. Examples of outstanding behaviour were seen in the playground where older students mentored younger ones, making an excellent contribution to the school community in providing

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excellent role models. This was also seen in a Year 7 games lesson where Junior Sports Leaders showed excellent initiative and very high levels of responsibility in assisting staff in supervising, encouraging and supporting younger students in playing rounders. Students' contribution to the school and local community is particularly strong. Their good spiritual moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their increasing confidence, high levels of maturity and consideration for others as they progress through the school. They understand and appreciate diversity of different cultures through a range of opportunities, such as visits to different places of worship, using different fruits grown around the world to make a fruit salad, and consideration of Muslim sporting events throughout the world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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.

How effective is the provision?

Observations of lessons confirm the school's view that most teaching is good or better and a few lessons are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, maintain very good relationships with students and manage behaviour effectively. Teaching assistants provide good support for learning, particularly during group and individual work. They challenge students to try harder and clarify any misunderstandings. Although assessment information is generally used well in planning and to inform students what they will

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achieve at the end of the lesson, this is not always consistent. In some lessons students of different abilities are given the same tasks. Consequently, some find learning too easy and others find it too difficult.

The curriculum is highly relevant to students' needs and planning builds systematically on their prior learning. A wide range of well-conceived visits and visitors to the school bring learning to life and stimulates enjoyment. Specialist sports college status makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development and achievement in sports. Sport permeates across all subjects promoting further interest and enjoyment of learning. Outstanding provision for work-related learning and careers, particularly through the development of enterprise, is making an equally strong contribution to personal development, particularly in raising students' self-esteem. The wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs is supported well by students. The strong emphasis on personal social and health education promotes safety, well-being and consideration for others. The curriculum is constantly developing to meet the needs of all students. The recently introduced initiative to promote the teaching of basic skills across all subjects is beginning to have a positive impact on students' learning and progress.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are fully reflected in the provision the school makes for those students from the most vulnerable circumstances. The intervention programmes for these students have an outstanding impact on their learning and well-being. Outstanding practice in working with a range of professional agencies ensures effective personalised targeted support which has a significant impact on students' learning and progress. The school provides a model of best practice in planning for personalised learning by engaging all concerned, including the student, parents and carers, in the process. Transfer arrangements are very smooth and considerably enhanced by the strong participation of parents and carers in transition reviews.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership and direction from the headteacher and deputy headteacher have led to the reorganisation of the leadership team to ensure that improvements are driven forward effectively by middle leaders. As a result, all leaders share the same drive for improvement. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in the monitoring of teaching and have a clear view of its impact on the learning and progress of all groups. This has led to the development of new initiatives to further promote basic skills across all subjects and the development of successful intervention groups. Members of the governing body are providing good support for the school. For example, the new Chair of the Governing Body

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has recently delivered a school assembly. Although the governing body carefully scrutinises the school's work through its committees, it does not have a system for forming an independent view of the school's effectiveness and has not developed a system for wider consultation with all parents and carers.

The school's good engagement with parents and carers is reflected particularly well in their very high involvement in transition reviews. Most parents and carers feel confident in approaching the school and are very pleased with the provision the school makes of their children. Leadership, especially through the sports college status, has been successful in developing outstanding partnerships which have a positive impact on students' learning and well-being. The school ensures that students have equal opportunities to succeed and participate in all it offers. It tackles discrimination and promotes racial harmony effectively. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls. Procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of students are good. All requirements for safeguarding are met and the environment is safe and secure. There is good promotion of safeguarding across a range of subjects such as technology, science, art and physical education. Exceptional arrangements are in place to support students from the most vulnerable circumstances. Outstanding opportunities are provided for students to promote their school and local communities, not only through sports leadership and work-related learning, but also through the enterprise initiative, horticulture initiative and hosting other students from across the county for various events within the consortium. National and global community cohesion are promoted well across the curriculum through, for example, the study and celebration of world faiths and Fair Trade week. These dimensions are also promoted through assemblies and topics on world issues, such as the Japanese tsunami and the Arab Spring in Egypt. The school makes good use of its resources to ensure good outcomes for students and therefore provides good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Sixth form

The sixth form provides a good education for its students. Achievement is good because all students, including those from the most vulnerable circumstances, make good progress in their accredited course and in developing independence. Students gain a wide range of qualifications including the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' award and the Nation Open College Network entry level courses in sport and leisure, design and technology, and horticulture. Students develop confidence and actively contribute to the life of the school through clubs and consortium day where they link up with sixth-form students from other settings. The curriculum is tailored well to their needs, with students enjoying the growing range of accredited course offered through the very well organised consortium with other schools. Teaching is good and ensures good learning and progress. Students' needs are thoroughly assessed and the information gained is used effectively in planning, particularly for transition. Good care, guidance and support ensure that students are prepared well to face the challenges in life on leaving school. Good leadership of the sixth form has ensured the development of strong partnerships with other sixth forms to extend and build on the learning opportunities for students. Friars School hosts two of the county consortium offers in sports and leisure, and design and technology.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires expressed positive views of all aspects of the school's work. All agreed that the school keeps their children safe and that it helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Nearly all agreed that the school is led and managed effectively, that teaching is good, the school is meeting their children's needs, and that their children are making enough progress, enjoy school and are well prepared for the future. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns, mainly about communication between school and home and the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. These concerns were brought to the attention of the school. The inspection found that communication is good and that students' well-being is strongly promoted by outstanding care guidance and support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Friars 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	60	14	33	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	56	19	44	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	47	18	42	2	5	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	44	20	47	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	24	56	17	40	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	44	19	44	3	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	44	23	53	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)	17	40	23	53	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	51	18	42	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	49	17	40	2	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	37	21	49	0	0	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	20	47	19	44	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	56	16	37	2	5	1	2

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 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 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Friars School, Wellingborough, NN8 2LA

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We were impressed with the way you help each other and how well you get on together. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and that you feel very safe and we agree. Yours is a good school and here are more things we found out about it.

All staff care for you extremely well and help you all to stay very safe in school. The sports college status has made a very big difference in ensuring you stay extremely healthy and that you achieve exceptionally well in sport. I was most impressed by the Junior Sports Leaders who were extremely responsible and showed great initiative in encouraging other students to do their very best in sports. Your behaviour is good and helps you concentrate on learning. Teaching is good and enables you to learn and make good progress. You make excellent progress in sports. The school has excellent partnerships with others and has made good links with your parents and carers. Your school is well managed.

I have suggested two things to make your school even better.

I have asked the staff to make sure that you learn more by always letting you know what you will achieve in lessons and how to improve your learning. I have also asked them to make sure your work is neither too hard nor too easy.

I have asked the governing body to visit your school more often to see for themselves how good it is. I have also asked them to find ways of seeking the views of all your parents and carers.

You can help by asking your teachers whenever you are unsure of what you are doing and continuing to do your best. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead inspector

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