

Springwater School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121776
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380316
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Bradley
Headteacher	Yvonne Limb
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2009
School address	High Street Starbeck Harrogate HG2 7LW
Telephone number	01423 883214
Fax number	01423 881465
Email address	admin@springwater.n-yorks.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Eight lessons were observed, involving seven different teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils, representatives of the governing body, a group of parents and carers and a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including that relating to school improvement and the safeguarding of pupils. Twenty-five questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

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

- The achievement of different groups of pupils within the mixed-ability classes.
- Teachers' use of assessment information to set suitably challenging work for all individuals.
- Teachers' management of large staff teams in the classrooms to ensure they make the best use of time and offer the maximum degree of support to pupils.
- The degree to which the curriculum provides a smooth pathway from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form.

Information about the school

The school provides for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties. About a third have autistic spectrum conditions. A very small minority has moderate learning difficulties. Each pupil has a statement of special educational needs. About a third are looked after children. There are about twice as many boys as girls. Fewer than the average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The Early Years Foundation Stage department was established in January 2011.

The school has specialist status in cognition and learning and gained National Autistic Society accreditation in 2009. The school operates a significant outreach programme, supporting mainstream schools in providing for pupils with severe learning difficulties. These pupils are not on the roll of Springwater and are not included in the judgements reported by this inspection.

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

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. It is led with pride and passion by an exceptional headteacher. An outstanding governing body supports and challenges her. The headteacher is exceptionally well supported by her assistant headteachers. Parents and carers are unanimous in their support for the school and the way it is helping their children. They particularly appreciate the excellence of the care, guidance and support that is provided and the way this helps their children to feel happy and safe. As a result, pupils love coming to school each day. They attend whenever they can, work hard and behave outstandingly well. The school is held in high regard by the local authority and by other local mainstream and special schools.

The school's constant pursuit of improvement is extremely well supported by rigorous, perceptive and accurate self-evaluation. Previously outstanding performance has been maintained and the curriculum, judged good by the last inspection, is now outstanding. These factors contribute to the school's outstanding capacity for improvement.

Teaching is good. This results in pupils making good progress and learning well. Teachers are exceptionally skilled in promoting communication by whatever means possible and in understanding pupils preferred methods of learning. On occasion, opportunities are missed to identify and record some of the tiny steps in pupils' progress and then to use this information to create more precisely focused future tasks. Excellent provision for personal, health and social education contributes to pupils' excellent progress in developing essential personal skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and they make an excellent contribution to the school and local communities.

Excellence in the promotion of communication skills results in pupils being able to express themselves, make choices and communicate their needs. This plays a major part in preparing the pupils very well for their future well-being. The combination of good achievement and the outstanding development of key personal skills means that outcomes are outstanding overall and for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form. Both these settings are outstandingly well led and managed with an excellent provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Pursue excellence in teaching, learning and progress by:
 - investigating and refining systems for the identification and recording of the incremental steps that pupils make in their learning which are too small to be measured by conventional means
 - using the information gathered to add greater precision to the setting of future tasks.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and achieve well. They demonstrate this by settling quickly to work, paying rapt attention and behaving exceptionally well. They love joining in with all activities and contribute as much as they can by making huge efforts to communicate. This is often through the use of aids such as switches and signing or through the use of pictures, signs and symbols. Pupils demonstrate considerable pride in their achievements and parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children are making.

Pupils' learning and progress are good. No one leaves without some form of accreditation and recognition of the progress they have made in their learning and the acquisition of personal skills. There is no significant difference in the achievement of any group of pupils.

Pupils feel very safe. Older ones take great pride in helping younger or more vulnerable ones through the 'buddy' system. Pupils report that there is no bullying and that 'everyone is nice' to each other. Great care is taken to help pupils to understand how the nature of their difficulties makes them particularly vulnerable away from home or school and to recognise the signs of what could develop into an unsafe situation. Instances of misbehaviour are very rare and usually associated with recognised patterns of behaviour associated with autism. Pupils try very hard to stay healthy. They enjoy the fresh air and outdoor activities such as gardening and the school's woodland walk. The school has recognised that a few pupils are less enthusiastic than others about taking regular exercise and is in the process of adapting the physical education curriculum to include a wider variety of activities that may entice them; trampolining and the extension of dance activities have proved popular. Pupils share a strong sense of celebration and spirituality. They mix extremely well socially and gain invaluable insights into how people from other cultures live. This is greatly helped by visits to nearby conurbations such as Leeds and Bradford, where there is greater ethnic and religious diversity than is found in Harrogate. There is no unauthorised absence and there are no persistent absentees. Any absence is usually the result of sickness, hospitalisation or transport difficulties.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

How effective is the provision?

There is a good team of skilled, enthusiastic and experienced teachers. Virtually all teaching is at least good and sometimes it is outstanding. None is inadequate. In line with its specialist status and the enhanced training this has entailed, teachers are particularly adept at identifying the preferred learning styles of pupils, recognising, for instance whether pupils learn best by looking, listening or feeling. Teachers are also equally skilled in involving all pupils in mixed-age and mixed-ability groups in all activities at a level that allows them to work with as much independence as possible and with a similar chance of success. All teaching strongly promotes communication skills by whatever means possible, with skilled use of a wide range of augmentative aids. When teachers sum up at the end of each lesson great care is taken to establish what pupils have learned and remembered rather than simply reporting what they have done. Great attention is paid to providing pupils with choices and guiding them towards the better ones. The management of behaviour is excellent, especially in the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions. A good example of this was seen when a teacher recognised that a pupil was not, despite appearances, being stubborn and uncooperative but just needed more time to process instructions. Large classroom teams are usually very well managed by teachers with the result that very little time is wasted in changeovers between activities and pupils' personal needs are very well met and their dignity maintained. In the best lessons, staff observe and note simple responses such as the blink of an eye, a gesture or a change of expression that could signify progression or regression but this is not universally evident.

What makes the curriculum special is the way it is designed around the needs of individuals, offering them varied pathways to progression from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form. There is great flexibility in these

¹The 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.

pathways, allowing pupils to change route in the light of changing circumstances. Occasionally, the curriculum remains at a sensory level while in other instances it develops into one that promotes the gaining of qualifications and preparation for adult life. In every instance the curriculum is matched to the needs of the pupil. Throughout the school, the central tenet is to promote communication and encourage choice and independence. The innovative development of a 150 word key vocabulary which can be consistently and simply conveyed verbally or through signs and pictures is making a great contribution. The outstanding way in which the promotion of personal skills is finely balanced with the acquisition of basic learning skills provides an example of exemplary cross-curricular links. The curriculum is extensively enriched through events such as celebrating the Chinese New Year and raising funds for Comic Relief, which have added variety and fun to pupils' experiences. Trips and the welcoming of visitors are regular features of school life. Pupils particularly enjoy their health and beauty 'moments' in a session each Friday.

The degree of care, guidance and support offered to pupils is of the highest quality. This helps anxious and uncertain pupils to feel particularly secure. Staff go to great lengths to identify the needs of each individual and to ensure they receive the support they need. They are ever vigilant to notice signs of distress or discomfort and respond quickly to alleviate the causes. Procedures to manage unpredictable behaviour are very well established, consistently applied and highly effective. Staff are extremely well trained in the safe handling of pupils and in aiding their movement. The school skilfully coordinates the work of the multitude of agencies and professionals involved in the care and support of pupils and their families; this is especially valued by parents and carers in times of distress or change.

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?

There is tremendous 'strength in depth' in the leadership, management and governance of the school. The headteacher has been inspirational in embedding a culture of high ambition, purpose and constant improvement. This is a very happy school where leaders and managers at all levels are keen to take on responsibilities and fulfil them to the best of their abilities, often through taking advantage of extensive, high-quality training opportunities, many of which are equally helping to drive up the quality of teaching.

The governing body is extremely proud of its school and works tirelessly to suggest and support improvements. Exceptional care is taken to ensure that the school meets all requirements. The key to its outstanding success is the excellence with which it engages with pupils, parents, carers and staff. This is often as a result of the fact that many members of the governing body are the parents or carers of pupils.

Responses to the parental questionnaire testify to parents’ and carers’ satisfaction with the school’s work. The school works tirelessly to keep them well informed about their children’s progress, for instance, through the highly valued home–school diaries which help to address the difficulty of many pupils not being able to tell their parents or carers about their day in school. The school works exceptionally effectively with many partner schools, professionals and organisations. Its management of the outreach programme, provided partially through its specialist status, is much valued. Partnership activity is providing excellent value for money because specialist status has contributed to enhanced training which in turn has been put to the benefit of pupils in this and other schools at no extra cost to the school.

The outstanding promotion of equal opportunities is central to the school’s work. The results of extensive and accurate monitoring and evaluation of outcomes convincingly confirm that there are no significant differences between groups. Minor differences are promptly followed up and rapidly remedied.

In recognition of the extreme vulnerability of all of its pupils the school accords the highest possible attention to safeguarding them. Potential hazards in every aspect of the life of the school are carefully assessed with risk assessments extending to individual pupils as well as events and actions. Staff have very clearly defined responsibilities and are exceptionally well trained.

There is good promotion of community cohesion. An action plan is newly in place but actions have not been fully evaluated. The school operates as a totally cohesive community. Many excellent initiatives are helping to broaden the community’s understanding and tolerance of disability. Community groups make extensive use of the school’s facilities, including the hydrotherapy pool and hall. Pupils enthusiastically participate in events such as Starbeck in Bloom and regularly raise funds for charities.

These are the grades for the 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	1
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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding in all respects. The children currently in the setting all have physical and learning difficulties. All are very highly dependent, some totally, on adult support. All children in the setting are over three years of age. Progress is skilfully monitored and recorded through observations and the use of photographs to show responses to stimuli such as when they have their feet placed in a foot spa. Outstanding outcomes are clearly evident in the way that children who have been previously uncommunicative and highly dependent rapidly discover an identity and learn that through very basic responses they can express their feelings and needs. They are provided with opportunities to make choices.

The learning environment is highly stimulating and imaginatively resourced. Children are well taught and exceptionally well cared for, guided and supported. The curriculum closely follows national guidance.

The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Developing the provision has been treated with urgency and considerable skill.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is outstanding. It has a clear and distinctive identity that reinforces the students' feeling of 'moving on'; this is highly significant for those students who have spent up to 16 years in the same educational establishment. Students who transfer into the sixth form from other special schools say that they have been welcomed. All students are extremely well prepared for the future. For most this involves further support and training in other settings. There is an excellent programme of work-related studies, including work experience in garden centres and a coffee shop which resulted in the school gaining the work-related learning and careers guidance quality mark. Students can gain external accreditation, usually through schemes from an approved awarding body that offers programmes to promote key life skills. Over the past four years all leavers have successfully completed their courses of study and virtually all have transferred into suitable further settings. This is a consequence of extremely perceptive and detailed student-centred plans to assist their preparation for life after school. Leadership and management are outstanding. High-quality links have been established with local colleges and training providers. Leaders and managers show a considerable awareness of how accreditation opportunities and pathways can be adapted to meet students' changing needs and expectations.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers fully support the school. There was an above average response to the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection and there were no dissenting voices. This report fully endorses their views that their children are making good progress, enjoy school and are very well looked after.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Springwater 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 inspector received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	71	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	43	11	52	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	67	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	48	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	48	10	48	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)	10	48	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	62	7	33	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	67	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	62	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	71	4	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	76	4	19	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



12 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Springwater School, Harrogate, HG2 7LW

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to your school. This letter is mostly addressed to sixth form students. I have asked your teachers to explain what I am saying by any means they can. It tells you what I found on my visit.

- Springwater is an outstanding school.
- You are well taught and make good progress in your learning.
- You grow up as delightful young people who try to help each other.
- You are very well looked after and enjoy school.
- Your headteacher and her staff are very good at their jobs.

To make things even better I have asked the school to ensure all teachers recognise every little step you take in making progress and make sure that they are very clear about what you need to learn next.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger
Lead inspector

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