

Landgate School, Bryn

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 134297 |
| Local authority | Wigan |
| Inspection number | 381665 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 April 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Eric Craven |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 4–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 49 |
| Of which number on roll in the sixth form | 3 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Amanda Winstanley |
| Headteacher | Janet Sharps |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 March 2010 |
| School address | Landgate Lane Bryn Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan WN4 0EP |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eric Craven

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons, taught by eight staff; approaching four hours were spent observing teaching and learning. Three of the lesson observations were jointly undertaken with senior leaders. Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff from the communication team, a group of learners and the Chair of the Governing Body. In addition, five telephone conversations took place with parents and two with officers of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, safeguarding files and assessment data. The 21 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with those from staff and learners.

Information about the school

Landgate School, Bryn is a smaller than average-sized special school providing for learners with a diagnosis of autism. All have a statement of special educational needs. Less than a quarter are girls. Around a third of learners are known to be eligible for free school meals, about twice the national average. All are transported to and from school and come from all parts of Wigan. There are very few students in the 'college' class, which is the school's sixth form provision, and even fewer learners at the Early Years Foundation Stage. There has been a restructuring of senior staffing since the previous inspection. The school has Investors in People and the Leading Aspect Award in Communication.

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 of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- This is a good school that has consolidated and built upon its previous good work and outcomes. The school is not outstanding because more teaching needs to be of the best quality if learners are to make even more rapid progress.
- Teaching is consistently good across the school. Planning that is now of high quality and effective use of assessment data are telling factors in improvements to teaching. There are opportunities missed, however, to get some learners to think more deeply about the work they are doing and in further promoting their independence.
- From low starting points, learners make good progress in their communication skills aided, in part, by the high-quality support they and staff receive from the school’s communication team.
- Taking into account some learners’ frustrations because of their communication difficulties, behaviour is good overall. They have positive attitudes to learning in the main. The rate of attendance is above average and is an indicator of learners liking the school. Indeed, their questionnaire returns and discussions indicate they enjoy school and feel safe.
- The school’s sixth form or ‘college’ is good. Students make good progress because the curriculum is tailored well to their particular needs and suitably focuses on life skills.
- Virtually all of the 46 staff who returned the questionnaire said they are proud to be a member of staff and know what the school is trying to achieve. Monitoring of the school’s work, including teaching, is rigorous. However, data about the progress learners make are not always used robustly enough by senior leaders to compare with similar groups of learners elsewhere.

- Most parents and carers express a very positive view of how the school meets their children's needs and looks after them. A small number have expressed dissatisfaction with communication and have concerns over their children's welfare. Welfare concerns have been investigated by the school and found to be unsubstantiated. The investigation was checked and endorsed by the local authority. Nevertheless, the school has commissioned an independent safeguarding audit to reassure parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that more is of the best quality by:
 - challenging some learners to think more deeply so they can work out solutions for themselves
 - wherever feasible and safe, getting learners to do things for themselves so they can become more independent.
- Compare the data the school has with other data available on the progress of similar learners nationally to give the school a fuller picture of how well it is doing.
- Review the method of communication with those parents and carers who feel insufficiently informed about how well their children are doing.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Analyses of teachers' assessments of the progress learners make show that they make good progress in all of their subjects. These assessments are suitably checked to ensure they are accurate. In the lessons observed during the inspection, learners' progress was also good overall. They were engaged and often showed persistence in their learning and most found learning fun.

Because of their significant special educational needs, learners' attainment in comparison to all learners nationally is low. The school's data indicate they make most progress in physical education. The speaking and listening element of their literacy development is less strong because of communication difficulties associated with their autism. Nevertheless, they make good progress in their communication and social skills overall. Indeed, a few learners have made very rapid progress in their communication skills in short periods of time, aided extremely well by the school's communication team which is led very well by the speech and language therapist employed by the school. A few learners were heard reading and some have developed an understanding of how sounds blend together and were able to use this effectively in reading words. Others had some reading skills but their understanding of what they were reading was less obvious. The progress made over time by the students in 'college' is good as is the progress of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's data show no discernible differences in the progress

made by other different groups of learners and, for example, boys and girls and learners eligible for free school meals achieve equally well.

Most parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire either agree or strongly agree that their children are making good progress and the same proportion say the school is helping their children develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The inspector agrees with these perceptions.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Its characteristics include dependably thorough and detailed planning that is informed well by staff's accurate assessments and evaluations of learners' work. This enables staff to match work closely to the needs and abilities of groups of learners and individuals. Relationships between staff and learners are positive. Staff use communication, often augmented well with signs and symbols, very effectively to help learners understand what is required and to get them to communicate as much as they can. They take opportunities to stretch learners' reading abilities wherever possible and with some success. Social skills are promoted well in lessons and praise is very well used in the best lessons so that it makes its mark. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to enliven learning. For example, in an ICT lesson one learner quickly demonstrated his good learning in shaping up a simple presentation using a child-friendly software program. Teaching in the 'college' is good and is well focused on getting students ready for life beyond school. The work of support staff is also helped by detailed planning and good communication between staff so they are clear about their roles and how they should help learners in lessons. However, on occasion too much is done for the learner rather than prompting them to try for themselves. Teachers do not always take the opportunity to challenge the thinking of learners to the fullest extent. Chances are missed, for example, to ask supplementary and more open-ended questions or to wait for a response, and in setting some tasks that would demand a little more from the learner. A few learners would benefit from being encouraged to be more independent in their work.

The three joint lesson observations undertaken by the inspector and senior leaders confirmed the accuracy of the school's judgment that the quality of teaching is typically good. Most parents and carers returning the questionnaire agree with the inspector that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of learners observed during the inspection was good. This is the case in lessons and when pupils are moving around the school and in other situations. Because work is planned well for their needs and interests, most learners' have positive attitudes to learning. The learners who met with the inspector are very positive about the school; they say they like school and feel safe. They also say there is no bullying in any form and that there is always someone they can turn to in school if they have a worry. All the learners who responded to the questionnaire, many with the necessary help of staff, say they are happy to come to school and almost all say that behaviour is good. Parents' and carers' questionnaire returns also gave a generally positive view of what behaviour is typically like with most saying

there is a good standard of behaviour and that their children feel safe. However, a smaller number say lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour. During the inspection disruptions to learning were rare. Because staff know pupils well and have behaviour plans in place for those who need them, they are able to respond speedily to calm a learner and prevent escalation. On the one occasion a learner was seen being uncooperative and difficult during the inspection this was managed well by staff and the learner quickly re-engaged and got on with his work. The school's records show that there are times when behaviour can be very challenging. The effective management of this is helped by staff having been trained in de-escalation techniques and safe restraint. The whole-school system of behaviour management was reviewed by staff last year which is aiding a consistency of approach. The school's records show there have been no incidents of bullying or racial incidents since the previous inspection. The use of fixed-term exclusion is rare with only one instance this academic year and no permanent exclusions.

Attendance is above average when compared to special schools and mainstream schools. The school's good analyses of data and vigilance over absence have helped them maintain this good rate of attendance over time.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers are effective in driving improvement. Governors play their part well. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school and this is helped by the informative reports they get from the headteacher and staff. They have recognised that more specific links with aspects of the school's work would put them in an even better position. The quality of teaching is on the rise and aspects such as planning and assessment are good examples of where improvements have been seen. Professional development is making a positive contribution to improving teaching. Almost all staff returning the questionnaire feel the school makes appropriate provision for their professional development.

Monitoring and evaluation are systematic and rigorous in most respects. This puts senior staff in a good position to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and to plan suitably for improvement. The data on the progress made by learners are fulsome and are used well on an individual learner basis to plan work and check on progress. However, they are not yet being used to benchmark the school's performance against available data for similar learners nationally. Senior leaders have taken some early steps to improve this. Middle managers and subject leaders are developing their management skills well. Reviews of learners' progress in their subjects are good and used well in formal discussions with senior managers about how to ensure the best outcomes for learners and in identifying underachievement and then successfully tackling it. The management of staff's performance is good. The development of staff's roles since the previous inspection has been striking. All staff have clear responsibilities and the school is benefiting from this demarcation of roles and delegated management.

Although a small number of parents contacted the inspector directly to heartily commend the school, there is a small number, some of whom also contacted the inspector, with concerns about the welfare of their children. Previously, the welfare concerns of these parents were investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. The

parents remained unhappy and the local authority scrutinised the investigations and found they were conducted properly. Any recommendations were acted upon. Sensibly, the school has now commissioned an independent safeguarding audit to offer further reassurance and is committed to responding immediately should any issues arise. The safeguarding arrangements seen during the inspection were effective. The school is vigilant over access to and egress from the school, and applies national guidance in vetting staff. Staff are watchful of learners and let their concerns be known and these are logged and monitored. Staff's vigilance is also helpful in promoting equality of opportunity. There are good examples of staff removing potential barriers to ensure learners have full access to the curriculum.

Most parents and carers say they would recommend the school to others and that they are well informed. However, a few parents and carers feel they do not get enough detailed information or access to or sufficient time with teaching staff. The small number of home-school diaries reviewed show that there is a frequent communication flow but it is apparent that at least one parent was not aware of the roles of various staff in their child's classroom.

Provision for the learners' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They develop their social skills well and are taught right from wrong through the consistent application of the management of behaviour system. There is an array of opportunities for learners to experience other cultures and religions. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and well suited to the learners' needs. This is the case as well in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there is an appropriate balance of directed learning and free choice. The 'college' curriculum is kept under review and plans are already advanced for shaping this to the needs of a reduced number of students next year. The school's systematic evaluations and the improvements it has made show it has a good capacity to improve further.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance: | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour: | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Floor standards: | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



20 April 2012

Dear Learners and Students

Inspection of Landgate School, Bryn, Wigan, WN4 0EP

It was a pleasure to meet you when I inspected your school recently. Thank you to those of you who met with me to share your views.

I have judged that yours is a good school and I can see why you told me you are happy at school and learn a lot.

You make good progress in the subjects you are taught and you learn how to get on with other people. This is because teaching is good and the things you are given to do are most often interesting to you. I was pleased to see you behaving well and that you say there is no bullying. I judge that the staff do well in helping those of you who do sometimes have behavioural difficulties. The school is managed well and the headteacher and other senior staff know what the school needs to do to get even better.

The things I have asked staff to do to improve even more are: to make the teaching even better than it is; to make more use the information they have on how well you are doing; and to check on how well they communicate with your parents and carers.

Do keep working hard and trying your best.

You have my good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead inspector

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