

David Lewis School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111499
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	378311
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Austin HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Isobel Hind
Headteacher	Pauline Greenall
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed parts of 10 lessons taught by four teachers and led by three teaching assistants. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the residential manager, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's improvement plan, data about students' progress, individual learning plans and information about the curriculum. Responses in 11 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and three completed during the inspection on Parent View (the online survey) were taken into account. Fifteen staff questionnaires were also analysed.

Information about the school

The school is part of the David Lewis organisation and shares an extensive parkland site with provision for other users, also with disabilities and learning difficulties. Students come from a wide geographical area. All have serious neurological conditions, usually including difficult-to-treat epilepsy, significant communication difficulties and many display challenging behaviour. Students have severe, complex, profound and multiple disabilities and learning difficulties. Some have autistic spectrum disorder and many suffer from medical conditions. All have statements of special educational needs. Most students are of White British heritage, with more boys than girls on roll. The majority of students are resident, some of them all the year round: 16 students are looked after. The provision for Key Stage 4 and sixth-form students is fully integrated, reflecting students' needs rather than their ages. The school accesses a broad range of on-site therapeutic services. It holds the Achievement through Well-Being 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	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 where all who work with the students share a strong commitment to ensuring that each one makes the progress they are capable of and enjoys the best possible quality of life. This is not yet an outstanding school because the link between its identified priorities and planning for improvement is not strong enough. Additionally, on occasion the targets set for students are insufficiently precise, leading to lessons which do not fully meet students’ needs.
- The personalised, integrated approach to students’ education and care makes a significant contribution to their good achievement. School and care staff know students’ learning and personal development targets and help students work towards these during the school day and beyond. The policy of ensuring that students’ medical conditions impinge as little as possible on their time for learning works well. The school’s ethos is one in which equality of opportunity is paramount.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. The well-tailored curriculum is closely matched to students’ needs. Fostering students’ communication and independent living skills pervades the broad range of on- and off-site experiences. These make a good contribution to students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Highly effective systems for the consistent management of behaviour make a strong contribution to students’ good achievement. Staff respond rapidly to students’ behavioural issues, drawing on the wide-ranging expertise of the behaviour and multi-disciplinary teams to establish helpful strategies for ensuring students’ well-being and readiness for learning.
- Leadership and management are good. The teamwork of the headteacher and teachers in managing developments is effective, as is evident in the progress since the previous inspection. This demonstrates the school’s good capacity to improve. Suitable systems are in place for managing performance and monitoring the quality and impact of provision. However, these are not used to full effect in determining the school’s priorities: consequently, improvement planning lacks rigour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To improve the quality of learning further, ensure that:
 - students' targets are always appropriate and sharply focused
 - lesson planning takes these into account fully.

- To drive improvement more efficiently, ensure that:
 - there is a tight link between the school's self-evaluation and its priorities
 - that the improvement plans clearly reflect the priorities
 - progress towards meeting the priorities is monitored at regular intervals.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Overall, students achieve well; they make good progress towards suitably demanding targets, almost all of which are carefully matched to their needs and stages of development. Their good progress is promoted well by planning which takes account of the full range of targets, such as those for physiotherapy and behaviour, for each student within each activity. Daily assessments help to ensure that planning is highly responsive to students' learning needs. However, assessments are less effective where targets are too general, diluting their impact on learning. Students' progress over time is tracked effectively at regular reviews and new targets are set. Helpfully, a nationally recognised system for recording progress is used in common with the on-site college to which a number of students progress.

An integrated approach ensures that learning is not seen as the preserve of the school, so that opportunities for students to develop and practise their skills are fostered in the residential houses. This continuum is particularly helpful when students' medical conditions mean that they are unable to spend a full day in school. Staff know students very well and are adept at maintaining their routines to support learning.

Students' enjoyment of learning was evident in a number of lessons observed. In a numeracy session students concentrated well on a series of mathematical games, selected carefully to match their levels of understanding. One student worked steadily on counting objects from one to ten, while others matched shapes, colours and sizes. In a cookery session students enjoyed creaming butter and sugar to make a cake. Adults promoted their communication skills well, for instance through the use of a tablet computer.

Responses in the parental questionnaires were uniformly positive about the progress students make.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers who responded in the questionnaires agreed that their child is taught well. Inspection evidence supports their view: the quality of teaching is good overall. As one parent commented, 'the teacher gets the best out of our daughter.' Daily assessments inform planning which takes careful account of students' individual targets as well as their medical needs and personal preferences. A broad range of communication methods is employed well to support learning and engage students in making choices. For instance,

sequenced pictorial lists help students to perform tasks such as putting together the items for a picnic or getting changed for swimming. When appropriate to the individual, numbers are included to promote numeracy. Resources are carefully selected, frequently for their sensory qualities, to engage students' interest. For example, students enjoyed the sensations of waving the parachute, sitting underneath it, experiencing the airflow and watching the movement of the twinkling balloons. In an art lesson the fabric for making Olympic torches was well chosen both for its texture and shimmer. Electronic resources, such as touch screens, helpfully increase the range and interactive nature of learning. Where teaching is less successful, students' targets lack sufficient focus so lesson planning is not well targeted. Consequently, activities are too complex and insufficiently well supported by communication prompts.

Overall, adults supporting each student make a valuable contribution to their learning and personal development. They know the student's individual routines, as well as agreed strategies for managing their behaviour, and help considerably to sustain their engagement with the tasks in hand. As one parent commented, 'the dedication of the staff ...is second to none.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The extensive expertise of the behaviour specialists and the multi-disciplinary team is an integrated part of the school's provision for its students, all of whom can present challenging behaviours which may be unsafe. This team helps school staff implement the agreed positive approach to behaviour management which has reduced incidents considerably since its introduction. The holistic approach to meeting students' needs is tightly organised and very effective in securing consistency in managing behaviour across the school and residential houses. Thorough record keeping ensures that all staff involved in a student's education and care are aware of their needs, strategies for managing their behaviour and the attendant risks. Specialist support teams respond rapidly so that changes in strategies and, where necessary, adjustments to the environment are made swiftly to support students' learning and personal progress well. Staff are adept at recognising the signals students give and responding to good effect to reduce the individual's stress. Combined with an exceptionally high rate of attendance, this ensures that students make good progress in their learning. Questionnaire responses from parents and carers are positive about this aspect of the school's work.

Leadership and management

A strong sense of moral purpose permeates the school's work, which has equality of opportunity at its heart. The ethos is one of close teamwork, with staff collaborating very effectively to meet the needs of individual students. Highly responsive systems are in place to secure students' health and well-being and enable their learning to proceed. Very effective liaison ensures that the wide-ranging skills of the multi-disciplinary team are drawn on, often rapidly, to address issues that are impeding a student's progress.

Good systems are in place to keep parents and carers well informed about their child's progress. In addition, parents and carers can contact the school at any time. Consistency of approach is promoted well through effective sharing of strategies. Daily diaries enable families and residential staff to see what the students have been doing during the day. Procedures for helping new students to settle into the school are thorough and well

considered, providing families with support through this transition phase. Preparation for the move to college, which some students make, starts in good time.

Systems are in place to quality-assure the school's work. Students' progress is reviewed at regular intervals and their targets revised accordingly. The headteacher is thorough in her approach to this and provides suitable challenge to teachers where targets lack precision. The regular monitoring of teaching and learning is conducted by both the director of education for David Lewis and the headteacher. Feedback is detailed with clear areas for development. These processes ensure that the school knows its strengths and areas for development. However, the school's self-evaluation, its priorities and its improvement planning are not tightly connected. Improvement planning lacks clarity regarding actions and timescales, making it difficult to monitor.

The governing body is very well informed about the school and its place in the David Lewis organisation. Governors are very supportive of the school's work and those with specific responsibilities, such as safeguarding, monitor these aspects diligently. The governing body's role as a critical friend is less well developed. The David Lewis organisation holds overarching responsibility for safeguarding and ensures that requirements are met fully.

The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to students' progress, despite the occasional lack of clarity about the use of time. A City and Guilds award introduced this year provides the framework for learning which is well matched to students' needs. The key areas of communication skills, community participation, independent living skills and being healthy are delivered through a broad range of experiences on and off site. The many facilities and amenities available at the David Lewis Centre enable students to enjoy sensory experiences, swim regularly, use a variety of bikes and outdoor play equipment, and take on jobs such as sorting the recycling. Students have frequent and regular opportunities further afield to do the class shopping, exercise in a specialised gym and go horse riding. Team enterprise gives them experience of creating and selling products. Some students, for whom this is appropriate, follow a course at a local college of further education for half a day each week. This term the Olympic Games are the theme within which much work is being planned. Students are taking part in their own challenges to 'Be a 2012 Sporting Hero' as well as making torches and finding out about the Olympic rings. This rich range of experiences supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.
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.



27 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of David Lewis School, Alderley Edge, SK9 7UD

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school. I think you go to a good school where all the staff are highly committed to making sure you do the best you can. They all work together well to make sure your needs are met. This helps you to spend as much time as possible learning, both in school and in the houses.

You make good progress. All the staff know you very well and help you work towards your targets. Lots of aids are used to support your communication. You are given a choice whenever possible. You are given lots of help to manage your behaviour. Your attendance is excellent.

Teaching is good. It was good to see you enjoying activities such as drumming and dancing. You have lots of opportunities to develop skills which will help you as you get older. I could see that you enjoy horse riding, visiting the gym at Wingate and going shopping. Riding the bikes, going for walks and swimming all help you to be healthy. Some of you have cycled a long way since you have been at school – 600 miles in one case! This term's work has already begun on the theme of the Olympic Games. You are lucky to have a teacher who is going to be an Olympic torch bearer.

The headteacher and teachers work together as a team to make sure the school keeps improving. There are two things which would help things get even better. These are making sure:

- your learning targets are as focused as possible
- the school's planning has the right priorities and is thorough.

With good wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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