

Oswaldtwistle White Ash School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119894
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	398657
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Hilary Ward

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Sheran Perera
Headteacher	Phillipa Conti
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Hilary Ward
Terence McKenzie

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed seven teachers and one higher level teaching assistant in eleven lessons and in structured social and therapy sessions. Two of the lessons were shared observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with a group of parents and carers, with pupil members of the school council, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors analysed questionnaire responses from 34 parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, interim improvement planning, pupil progress data, and governing body minutes.

Information about the school

There has been a significant change in circumstances since the school's last inspection. White Ash School has been part of a local authority reorganisation in the area, which has amalgamated three special schools into two. Previously the school was an all-age special school but since September 2011 the school is only providing for Early Years Foundation Stage and primary aged pupils. The school admits pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, a minority with moderate learning difficulties and a few pupils who have additional social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. An increasing number of pupils have complex medical and health conditions. In addition to the 64 pupils currently on roll, all of whom have statements of special educational need or are in the process of formal assessment, there are a small number of pupils on shared placements with other schools. Over a third of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds with a third of these speaking English as an additional language. There are a very small number of looked after children.

The school holds a range of awards which include National Healthy School status, Eco Schools Bronze and Silver, Sports Active Silver Award, Race Equality Mark and, most recently, Centre of Excellence for Inclusion. Several of these awards were achieved prior to reorganisation.

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	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- White Ash is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because the reorganisation of the school is very recent and there are inconsistencies in teaching and the role of the governing body. Nevertheless, overall leadership and management are effective with very good planning for the reorganised school and firm foundations for continued improvement.
- Good leadership of teaching has increased teachers’ knowledge and skills to meet the changing and diverse needs of the pupils, resulting in mainly good teaching. Occasionally, activities are not as closely matched to the intended learning outcomes for individuals as they might be and too much time is taken in whole class teaching. Most teaching assistants are very skilled in supporting pupils. However, the appointment of new staff for the reorganised school means that some assistants have not yet developed the capacity to fully meet pupils’ increasingly complex needs.
- Achievement and progress are good. Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge which, for the majority, are well below those expected for their ages. Given these starting points, all groups of pupils make at least good and some make outstanding progress, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The senior leadership team manages performance effectively by exceptionally thorough analysis of progress data. As yet, not all members of the governing body have the knowledge to be able to scrutinise the data provided.
- Behaviour is outstanding and staff work hard to help pupils develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils with complex behavioural needs respond very well to the consistent approach of staff and develop skills to manage their own behaviour. This results in a very cohesive community which is warm and harmonious and where pupils show respect for each other and adults.
- The school creates very strong and supportive links with parents and carers. The very large majority are extremely happy with the provision the school

makes for their child. All of those who returned questionnaires expressed the view that the school keeps their child very safe.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be more consistently outstanding by:
 - linking activities more closely to specific learning outcomes for individual pupils in all lessons
 - developing the skills of teaching assistants to work more independently with pupils so there is more individual and group work and less whole class teaching.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body by developing governors' knowledge to scrutinise pupil progress data more effectively.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their child is making at least good and often exceptional progress. Comments include, 'I have seen huge improvements' and 'Staff always challenge her to do her best.' For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage the exceptional quality of education and care often results in outstanding achievement in a short period of time, usually from very low starting points.

Pupils may enter the school at any age. A few attend part time on link placements with other schools, sometimes prior to full-time placements. Pupils make good progress because they thrive in the very supportive environment where attention to their well-being and personal development is recognised as essential to effective learning. Learning is good in lessons because teachers take account of pupils' prior learning. Appropriate regard is given to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children with sensory impairments are introduced imaginatively to tactile letters. Pupils show a real interest in books and more able pupils become good readers, taking into account their learning difficulties. They learn to tackle new words with confidence. Some pupils use their number skills in real life situations such as shopping in the local community. The school's focus on developing communication is threaded through all structured teaching, although strategies are not always so consistently used in informal settings such as the playground. Nevertheless, pupils make particularly good progress in developing effective communication. They enjoy and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Progress against individualised targets is tracked in careful detail by teachers and analysed by the senior leadership team. As a result, initiatives to accelerate progress of pupils who may be falling behind are put in place and quickly impact on progress. Teachers set carefully considered targets for the wide range of individual pupil needs so that there is no difference in the progress of any particular group. However,

occasionally the tasks set for pupils do not match intended learning outcomes for individual pupils closely enough and this slows learning in lessons. Pupils enjoy rewarding experiences which develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. On a 'trip' on an aeroplane to Spain, younger pupils tasted different foods, touched and played with sand and water, and went Flamenco dancing. In such sessions all pupils are supported to learn something new and participate in whatever way they can. When the inspector met with a large group of pupils from the school council and asked who enjoys school, a forest of hands shot up. This enjoyment is evident in lessons and pupils eagerly say how well they think they have done and how hard they have worked.

Quality of teaching

Overall the quality of teaching is good. All parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that their child is taught well and inspectors agree with this view. The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives children an outstanding start. The learning environment is stimulating and staff very skilfully assess children's progress, set ambitious targets and ensure an effective balance between directed activity and purposeful play.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, the best lessons are characterised by the use of assessment of prior learning to set ambitious targets for individual pupils. Most classes have pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and on occasions whole class teaching takes up too much time, making it difficult for all to achieve the learning objective. Support staff are deployed well but some staff are new or have changed roles and are still developing the necessary skills to provide individual support really effectively. Mainly, though, teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well, set challenging tasks and encourage independent learning. For example, one pupil was encouraged to use a dictionary for his writing rather than being told how to spell a word. Reading and writing activities are planned carefully for pupils' varying abilities. Teachers have high expectations of these skills and some pupils make exceptional progress, especially in their reading. Several teachers have additional skills and knowledge which they share with other staff to meet the differing special educational needs of the pupils.

The curriculum is organised effectively and is personalised to meet pupils' different learning needs. The school council has enjoyed leading the planning of the woodland area to increase opportunities for outdoor learning. At all times, attention is paid to pupils' mobility, therapy and health needs. Teachers work highly effectively with health professionals to incorporate support into lessons so that they contribute to, rather than distract from, pupils' learning.

Teaching consistently promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils reflect on their learning and topics, such as the study of foreign countries, help them to develop an understanding of other cultures. Teachers incorporate opportunities for social development into their planning and make use of frequent visits to extend pupils' understanding of others' lives. From an early age pupils are encouraged to make simple choices and to play and learn together.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils who may find certain situations very difficult are given strategies to learn to manage their own behaviour so that they concentrate in lessons and work cooperatively with their peers. The vast majority of parents, carers and staff believe that behaviour is consistently exemplary. It is managed successfully and does not disrupt learning. Parents and pupils state that there is no bullying of any type in the school. Inspectors observed only impeccable behaviour. All pupils say they feel safe in school. They clearly enjoy excellent relationships with staff and feel able to indicate their concerns if necessary.

Pupils are kind to one another and recognise that bullying is not acceptable. They take great care of each other. For example, at the end of the pupil meeting two boys went to collect another's crutches without being prompted. Pupils celebrate each other's successes at the end of lessons and in assemblies. They are polite to staff and visitors and respectful of each other's contributions in lessons. Staff work hard to develop social and moral understanding of issues such as the use of computer networks and disagreement resolution. Pupils learn how to use roads and transport safely and are looking forward to the opening of their cycle track. They understand the importance of using it safely.

Attendance of a small number of the most medically vulnerable pupils remains low, despite the school's best endeavours to support them to attend school. The attendance of the majority of pupils is good and contributes well to their progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good and increasingly effective. During the last year the inevitable focus on transition from being an all-age school to a primary setting has been highly successful. Nevertheless, senior leaders have not allowed this to distract from ensuring standards are maintained. They have laid firm foundations for the future of the school and there is good capacity for continued improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and senior leaders have a clear view of areas requiring improvement. They ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are given opportunities to professionally develop their skills to meet the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. The whole school, including members of the governing body, are involved in school improvement planning so that everyone takes ownership of agreed developments to improve outcomes for pupils. Monitoring of pupil progress by the senior leadership team is robust. However, at present, not all members of the governing body have the necessary skills to interrogate the data on pupil performance and thereby contribute to raising achievement to be consistently outstanding.

The curriculum is good and is constantly reviewed to ensure it matches pupils' needs and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The school goes over and above what is required to provide even young pupils with experiences in residential settings and to offer after-school, weekend and holiday clubs. Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, have the promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination at the heart of everything they do. Safeguarding arrangements are met.

Partnerships with other agencies ensure pupils' needs are fully met. Links with other schools provide a wealth of inclusion opportunities which benefit both White Ash pupils and their partner schools. The school works highly effectively with parents and carers who are extremely appreciative of the support they receive. Several parents and carers commented that staff are readily available if they want to discuss any concerns. They say that the school provides a 'real family atmosphere' and is a 'vibrant and fun place to learn'.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Pupils/Students

Inspection of Oswaldtwistle White Ash School, Accrington, BB5 4QG

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we visited your school. It was clear that you all really enjoy school and all the learning opportunities it provides for you. Thank you to those of you who gave up some of your lunch-time to come and talk to me. I especially enjoyed hearing about the plans for your woodland area and the cycle track which I'm sure you will enjoy using in the future. We think you go to a good school and these are some of the things we particularly like:

- the way in which you have settled so quickly into the 'new' school, especially those of you who only joined in September
- the very interesting learning experiences which teachers plan for you, especially all the trips out to visit different places
- the way in which teachers and teaching assistants help you to feel safe and work with other people to make sure all your needs are met really well
- your excellent behaviour.

We have asked your school to do a few things which we think will make it even better:

- to ensure you are all involved in all parts of the lesson by developing the role of the teaching assistants so there is less whole class teaching and more individual and small group work for you to do
- by making sure that the activities you are asked to do are linked well to the things teachers want you to learn in each lesson
- by making sure members of the governing body understand how teachers are assessing your work so that they can check more accurately on your progress.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Ward
Lead Inspector

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