

The Garth School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120752
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380096
Inspection dates	28–29 May 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Lewis

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	40
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Cocoran
Headteacher	Daran Bland
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
School address	Pinchbeck Road Spalding PE11 1QF
Telephone number	01775 725566
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Lewis

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons led by eight different teachers and higher level teaching assistants. Meetings were held with senior staff, teaching assistants, the Chair of the Governing Body and partner agencies such as the speech and language therapist. The inspector also met with members of the school council and other pupils and talked with them about their work. She observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's safeguarding documents and practices, its self-evaluation and improvement planning and the data the school holds about pupils' progress. Seventeen questionnaires from parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils were scrutinised.

Information about the school

The school caters mainly for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most also have additional difficulties and disabilities such as autistic spectrum disorders, sensory impairments and complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The large majority of pupils are from a White British background. There are almost twice as many boys as girls. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The youngest children, some of whom attend part-time, are taught alongside those in Years 1 and Year 2. Four students in the sixth form are taught with Key Stage 4 pupils in the school's 14-19 class.

The school is federated with a larger secondary special school about a mile away. The two schools share a headteacher and a governing body, as well as pooling some resources such as specialist staff. The two schools provide an outreach service, providing 20 secondary schools with advice about pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and social, communication and language difficulties. A portage worker is also based at the school and supports 13 families of pre-school children with disabilities. The school has a number of prestigious awards, including enhanced Healthy Schools status and Autism Accreditation through the National Autistic Society.

The school has had considerable staffing challenges in the last two years, including seven temporary long-term absences of teaching and support staff.

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	1

Key findings

- This is a good but improving school. It is not yet outstanding because more teaching needs to be of the best quality if learners are to make better progress and the different forms of communication used to support pupils are not used consistently enough in all contexts and all parts of lessons. However, the school does have several outstanding features including the ways in which senior staff and the governing body have led the school successfully through its staffing challenges so that it continues to develop and improve.
- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning from their starting points. Behaviour and safety are excellent, as is pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because the school really helps them to become much more self aware, independent and responsive. Pupils have extremely good attitudes to learning.
- Teaching is good and the curriculum is outstanding. Skilled deployment of teaching assistants and effective support for new or less experienced staff have ensured that pupils’ learning has been well supported despite staff absences. However, occasionally pupils are not as involved as they could be in all parts of lessons because the pace is too slow or too fast for them or because signs, symbols, pictures and objects are not used consistently to keep them in touch with what is happening or will happen. Provision for the youngest children is excellent because the teaching is often outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and are well prepared for the next stages of their education because of the wide ranging opportunities they have to apply their different skills in the local community and in their college work.
- The school benefits from highly effective leadership and its federated status. Staff performance is managed extremely well and there are excellent systems in place for checking up on teaching and pupils’ achievements.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring the pace and challenge of all parts of lessons so that all pupils are actively engaged at all times
 - using available teaching assistant support and other resources more effectively particularly in the whole class parts of lessons so that all pupils are kept in touch with what is happening and are engaged, even when it is not their turn
 - continuing to improve staff skills and confidence in using the different forms of communication that pupils need.
- Ensure that signs, symbols and objects of reference as well as other sensory resources are more consistently used in lessons and about the school to support pupils' understanding, communication and learning

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievements are good. This is for all pupils, whatever their disability, background or need including those who have free school meals. Pupils' individual needs mean that their attainment varies from the very earliest stages of development and awareness to being able to read simple texts and write short sentences about their experiences. Whatever their starting point, background or need, pupils make good and sometimes better progress in all subjects. This is because of the good teaching but also because the school now has excellent ways of checking up on how pupils are doing and is quick to identify any that might be falling behind or slowing in their progress. Parents and carers unanimously praise the progress their children have made and the ways in which they themselves are supported to help their children learn.

In some aspects of their learning and development, pupils' achievements are outstanding, such as their personal development, their physical development, mobility, their burgeoning independence and their engagement with other people. Staff work very well with therapists and seize opportunities to support the particular skills that are being worked on in fun ways, so that pupils really try their best. Excellent teamwork and careful observation of children in the youngest class mean that not a moment is lost for learning and children are given just the right amount of support to enable them to succeed or keep trying. Adults model well what they want pupils to learn and this helps pupils to join in and be part of a group whether in a game of 'five little monkeys' in the playground or 'wind the bobbin up' in the classroom. Older pupils read back with confidence the 'You're a Star' cards they have written and made about someone in their class and are proud to share and receive these. Most pupils are at very early stages of language development but their good

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and often better progress in listening sets them up well for work on sounds. A few older learners showed they were already developing an awareness of sounds and letters and how to blend them.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Excellent leadership has ensured that despite all the staff changes, staff have quickly adapted and been supported to meet pupils' needs effectively. Teaching teams plan and work well together, keeping very focused on what pupils need to learn to do next whilst also trying to find ways of doing this that will engage and enthuse pupils. A strong sensory element within the curriculum supports this and engages the interest of those with the most complex needs. Teaching is informed well by good ongoing assessments and observations and by the regular, detailed analysis the leadership carries out of every individual pupil's levels of progress.

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that they 'have a go' at new experiences even where they would normally find a diversion from routines challenging. Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well because of the many opportunities they provide for pupils to listen to and learn from each other and the interesting themes they explore with pupils. These, plus the celebration together of every small step of progress, help make pupils much more aware of others' needs, of their own achievements and of how interesting the world is. A strength is the way most teachers use every opportunity in lessons to reinforce and extend pupils' skills. For example, in an excellent lesson in the early years, snack time included skilled use of sign, symbols and objects which challenged children to make simple choices and communicate more clearly their intentions. In Key Stage 3 English and information and communication technology lessons, pupils designing Olympic posters and 'You are a Star' cards were challenged to improve their reading and writing further and did so. Teaching assistants made a very strong contribution to such lessons, knowing when to step back but also ever watchful to make sure that pupils kept engaged and focused, particularly in individual and group work. Occasionally, in the whole class part of lessons, teaching assistants are not so active in supporting pupils' learning. Pupils then lose focus as they have to wait too long while the teacher is talking with other pupils or because signs and symbols are not used consistently enough to keep them in touch with what is going on or what will happen next. All parents and carers returning the questionnaire agree that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are excellent. The school works extremely well with families and with other agencies to put in place effective behaviour management programmes. These are followed through very well so that pupils are given exceptionally clear feedback on how well they are doing. Incidents are rare, despite the challenges many pupils have, linked to their disabilities and needs. Learners who met with the inspector and those who could complete the questionnaires are clear that they feel very safe and cared for and that bullying of any form does not take

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place. Others demonstrate this in the ways they engage readily with the experiences the school provides and are excited by their learning, when their particular needs would usually make them very cautious. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are very safe, that behaviour is good and bullying is not a problem. Pupils' behaviour in lessons was never less than good and often outstanding. For example in an information communication and technology lesson, they praised each other's poster designs whilst offering ways in which these could be improved and received such criticism very well.

Pupils move around the school safely and show remarkable awareness and care for each other, for example in the playground. They follow their teachers' instructions well as to how to use scissors and other tools and what they must take care in doing. Older pupils and sixth form students understand how to keep safe and manage their behaviour in the broader community because the very practical curriculum, supported by the strong college links and work with the federated school, gives them many opportunities to develop their understanding and skills.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are excellent, including governance. Senior leaders have continued to drive through high quality improvements, such as improvements in the sixth form and early years accommodation and the developments of the early years and the whole school curriculum, despite the challenges in staffing. The now excellent curriculum helps pupils to apply their skills effectively in meaningful ways and is already accelerating progress in areas such as early reading and mathematics, information and communication technology and self help skills. It also provides many excellent opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development both within school and through the many excursions out into the community. Pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong. An air of celebration and determination is tangible in every classroom, as is the enjoyment of the many different multicultural experiences provided, including 'The Garth Olympics'. The federation provides a pool of resources and experiences which allow the school to stretch the highest attainers and nurture those who are most vulnerable. Pupils' safety is paramount and the ethos of care and concern for the individual and for their parents and carers is palpable in all that the school does. The school is meticulous in following through its safeguarding procedures which fully comply with guidance.

Excellent systems for managing performance, tracking progress and monitoring teaching are now in place and findings are carefully analysed and shared with staff. This has enabled new or less experienced staff to quickly grasp pupils' levels and needs and match their teaching to these well. It also means that no individual or group within the school is disadvantaged in any way because of their background, disability and need. All achieve well and have access to the resources they need and so the school meets its duties in relation to equality of opportunity very well. Staff skills have been strengthened where they have less confidence. For example, work with the speech and language therapist has led to a recent more intensive focus on different approaches to supporting communication and more work is planned. The

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quality of teaching is good and improving rapidly as a result of staff training, coaching and mentoring and clear feedback as to what now needs to be done. Middle managers contribute to this very well, monitoring standards in their subjects carefully and working alongside other staff in classrooms to provide support as to how to make the teaching and learning even better. All this, plus the school's meticulous tracking of pupils and targeting of interventions, means that the school is very well placed 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.



30 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Garth School, Spalding, PE11 1QF

It was lovely to meet you when I visited your school. Thank you for talking to me and for letting me look at your work. It was good to see you so happy and working so hard.

Thank you too to those of you who talked with me or answered the questionnaire. I was pleased to hear how much you liked your school and enjoyed your lessons. You told me that your school is a good school and you feel very safe there. I agree that it is a good school and staff are working very hard to make it even better.

These are some of the things I found out about your school.

- Your behaviour is excellent, because the teachers help you to understand what is right and what is wrong very well and let you know how well you are doing.
- You have very interesting things to do and the teaching is good so this makes your lessons fun and helps you to learn well.
- You make excellent progress in areas such as how you get on with everyone and how you are able to move about because staff work so well with the therapists and your parents and carers to help you do this.
- You make good progress in your learning in different subjects and sometimes even better, such as when you use the computer.

The things I have asked staff to do to make the school even better are to:

- make the teaching even better than it is
- use signs and symbols and other things even more when they talk to you so that you know what is happening or is going to happen at all times.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis
Lead inspector

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