

Springwell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111785
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378358
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Gina White HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Barraclough
Headteacher	Karl Telfer
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gina White
Nancy Walker

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eleven lessons were observed, taught by eight teachers. Eight of these lessons were joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team. Meetings were held with staff, parents, members of the governing body and the school council. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to pupils' progress, school improvement and safeguarding. Inspectors also analysed 24 parents' and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This special school serves the whole of Hartlepool and it caters for pupils who have a very wide range of learning difficulties. Pupils' needs range from moderate to severe or profound learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional difficulties and disabilities including emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, autism and sensory impairment. Many pupils also have communication difficulties. Pupils attending the school join at times throughout the school year. Just under a third of pupils at the school are dual registered, attending the school on placement from their primary schools for a short period. Pupils attending the school either have a statement of special educational needs or are having their needs assessed. The large majority of pupils are White British, with small numbers of pupils from a diverse range of ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The school has gained many awards since the last inspection, including the National Autistic Society's accreditation, Investors in People, and the Schools in Bloom 2011 Gold Medal. The school is part of the Hartlepool Teaching Schools Alliance.

The school's outreach programme provides expertise and support to mainstream schools, their pupils and families.

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

- Springwell is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because teaching, while good overall, does not ensure that work is matched precisely enough to ensure that the increasing number of more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 make even more rapid progress in their learning. Outstanding relationships with parents and carers, teachers' skills in initiating pupils' communication and their consistent and effective management of pupils' behaviour are strengths of the school.
- From starting points that are frequently at the very earliest stages of learning and development, pupils make good and often better progress to achieve their small-step targets in English, mathematics and science. Effective diagnoses and support enable almost all pupils to make rapid progress in developing communication skills, including signing. This swiftly develops pupils' confidence and their personal and social skills.
- Teaching is mainly good. Teamwork between staff is effective. Their expert knowledge of pupils' specialist needs and conditions is used effectively to plan lessons to promote pupils' engagement and develop their independence and concentration. Occasionally, opportunities are missed in lessons to monitor learning in order to judge when to intervene to provide more challenging work for more-able pupils. Pupils' progress towards their individual learning targets is not reviewed regularly or consistently enough to support pupils in making swifter progress in all lessons. Pupils understand when they have done well and their next steps for improvement. However, no mechanisms exist for pupils to have the opportunity to choose more demanding work.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent and this is well demonstrated in pupils' good attendance. Pupils say they feel exceptionally safe and parents and carers are confident about children's safety in school. Staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. As a result, these pupils make outstanding progress in improving their behaviour.
- Leaders at all levels are dedicated and focused on continuous improvement. The leadership is good of teaching and of the performance of staff. The

curriculum, training for all staff, and improvements in resources have been well aligned to meet the increasingly diverse needs of pupils. The effect of these changes is widely monitored and policies are regularly reviewed but sometimes do not place sufficient emphasis on the impact on pupils and their learning. Excellent arrangements to support pupils when they start at the school and when they leave are highly valued by parents and carers. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress and the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently monitor pupils' learning in lessons and intervene quickly to provide more challenging work for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils' progress towards their individual learning targets is reviewed on a regular and more consistent basis in all lessons to ensure that work is matched precisely to individual needs
 - providing opportunities for pupils to say when they want to try harder work.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation by:
 - ensuring that a rigorous and consistent focus on pupils' learning is embedded securely in all monitoring and in reviews of the school's work and policies.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress in lessons is mostly good. Pupils enjoy lessons, participate and learn to stay on-task, although sometimes the pace of learning slows a little. Parents and carers know their children make good progress, particularly in developing communication skills. Those who met with inspectors each had their own examples to explain how their children's learning had improved. One parent explained the difference this had made, 'My child doesn't talk but I am able to communicate more with him because the school are teaching him to use symbols.'

All teachers and classroom assistants are trained in helping pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, the majority of pupils are acquiring basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of good teaching over time, pupils are developing an understanding of meaning, recall the sequence of events in stories and are making small steps to write and recognise numbers and basic shapes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and those throughout the school following programmes suitable for their early learning and development, join in counting songs, are learning to link sounds and letters and recognise basic colours

and shapes. More-able pupils are developing reading skills independently to support their writing, and their calculation and problem-solving skills are improving.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies widely. However, it is generally low, due to their disabilities and special needs. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils are close to meeting national expectations for their age. Teachers use their expertise well to accurately assess pupils' needs. All pupils, including those who are on dual placements, have targets appropriate to their next stage of development. Reviews during the year and at the end of key stages demonstrate that most pupils are making good progress over time to achieve their small-step targets. A trend of above average progress is well established. Progress is greater and more marked for pupils the longer they attend the school.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers know that teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are well planned to meet pupils' needs and interests and to promote their participation. Well-chosen stories often capture pupils' interest and teachers use this effectively to develop writing skills. Visits, visitors and experiments are used effectively to make learning meaningful and fun. For example, in science, pupils made windmills, streamers and blew bubbles to investigate the power of natural forces. In almost all lessons, tasks are modelled first to ensure pupils understand what is expected of them and to support them in recalling previous learning. In one class, the teacher gave examples of rhyming words and partly-completed sentences. Pupils understood the task and learning moved on quickly as they used their own rhyming words to create original verse. Teachers make effective use of resources to deepen pupils' understanding and to bring stories to life; for example, different kinds of fish, crabs, starfish and seaweed helped pupils to understand events in the story *'Fidgety Fish'* and later to recall the events in sequence. Pupils' independence is well planned for and encouraged in all lessons, including those sessions to promote their physical development. For example, some pupils with the most complex and severe learning needs confidently moved, crawled and slid unaided in the soft play area. Where the provision is most effective, teachers regularly check pupils' work and their understanding and adapt the tasks in light of this to ensure that they are always challenging. This accelerates pupils' learning and progress. However, this is not consistent across all lessons and the pace of learning often slows, particularly for the more-able pupils because the work they are given repeats but does not extend their earlier learning sufficiently. Pupils' progress towards their individual learning targets is not reviewed regularly enough to support them consistently in making swift progress in all lessons. Occasionally, opportunities are missed in lessons to reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy skills when undertaking other activities.

Regular assessment and marking of pupils' work takes place. Feedback to pupils, in ways that they understand, has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils know how well they are doing and say staff explain the next steps for improvement. A range of strategies are used across classes, for example 'traffic lights', rewards and symbols. Teachers say, 'well done', or, 'excellent', while other pupils know that the note the teacher writes in their book, 'is for me'. Some pupils can recognise mistakes in their work, such as missing capital letters. There are no mechanisms for pupils to use to ask for more challenging work. One pupil explained, 'I would like harder work

sometimes, I don't mind getting it wrong because I can always learn and I could get some of it right'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is above average and punctuality is excellent. High levels of behaviour are maintained around school and in lessons for the vast majority of pupils. The school is calm and well-ordered and pupils follow clear routines in lessons and around school. Almost all pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils settle quickly to tasks, cooperate and collaborate well with each other. They make considerable efforts to sustain concentration, focusing on tasks for extended periods. Teachers are skilled in judging when pupils are ready to move on and successfully maintain their high levels of involvement. Pupils are keen to share what they have learned and are proud of their achievements. For example, pupils were excited on returning from a visit to the beach and proudly showed adults and talked about what they had found. A wide range of opportunities enables pupils to improve their social skills and to learn and apply well-established routines. A family atmosphere pervades the dining hall and pupils know what behaviour and noise levels are acceptable. They willingly help around school, taking turns to help to clear the table following lunch, and supporting others by helping them to make their needs and wants known. Pupils with previous behaviour difficulties are learning strategies to support them when they get angry. They say they are behaving better and the school's behaviour logs confirm that incidents are reducing markedly.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school and on trips because staff protect them. They know what bullying means and are equally clear that, 'it does not happen here', and that their differences are respected. Pupils learn about risks and how to stay safe in ways that are meaningful to them such as road safety and using the internet. Good use of the current topic 'Seaside Rescue' helps them to know what to do in an emergency. Parents and carers are confident their children are safe, that high levels of behaviour are expected and that occasional incidents are managed well by staff.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff work effectively together to drive improvement. The school is rising to the challenge of supporting an increasingly diverse range and breadth of pupils' needs. Professional development is making a positive contribution to teaching and is developing staff expertise to meet the challenges involved in developing the basic skills of more-able pupils. Aspirations are appropriately focused on supporting all pupils to achieve their best. Improvements to facilities and effective use of resources support pupils with the most intensive needs exceptionally well.

The quality of school self-evaluation is good. Systems are well embedded across all aspects of the school's performance and inform planning appropriately. The quality of teaching and the performance of teachers are kept under regular review through a suitably wide range of monitoring and evaluation strategies. However, they do not always focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently of the highest quality. Plans are well

advanced to develop the role of subject coordinators in order to distribute leadership more widely across the school.

Curriculum provision is broad and balanced and well informed by pupils' care plans to meet their specialist needs. A wide range of clubs, extra-curricular visits and creative and practical opportunities, such as cooking and gardening, are much enjoyed and enrich pupils' learning. The impact of the curriculum on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Improvements since the last inspection are developing pupils' awareness of other cultures. Good opportunities to learn about customs and religious practices are embedded in the curriculum. Links are developing with schools in other parts of the country and internationally, to enhance pupils' understanding of community.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body meet their statutory responsibilities and support and challenge the leadership well. They are well informed and are beginning to find out for themselves the impact that their policies are having on pupils, although they acknowledge a need to improve this even further. The strong promotion of equal opportunities, determination to tackle discrimination and inclusion are well demonstrated in the good progress that pupils make. The school meets its responsibilities for safeguarding. Excellent support enables parents and carers to be involved in their children's learning. Parents say that 'staff go out of their way to support you'. They value the efforts the school goes to in funding the provision of hydrotherapy and support for their children's speech and language needs. Effective partnership arrangements with statutory services and local schools are well-established. Much care is taken to get support plans right and pupils on dual placement are making good progress. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

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.



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springwell School, Hartlepool, TS26 0TB

Thank you for your welcome and for your help during the inspection of your school. It was good to have your views, and to talk to you and see you at work in lessons. This was really useful in helping us to come to decisions about your school. This is what we found.

- Springwell is a good school. Your behaviour is excellent and you really enjoy coming to school. Your school helps you to learn and do well.
- Teaching is good. Staff make lessons interesting and enjoyable. You very much enjoy your topic work and learning to read. You take great pride in your work and the jungle gardens and displays of your poems and stories are brilliant.
- Staff take care of you and you feel safe at school. You are learning to get on well and help each other.
- The headteacher and all the staff make sure that you learn about many things. Lunchtime clubs and exciting trips are fun and the soft play area, pool and food room are used well to support your learning.
- The support that staff give you, when you join the school and when the time comes for you to leave, is very good. The work that they do to help your parents and carers to help you to develop and learn is excellent.

Some things can be improved to help you to make even better progress. I have asked your headteacher to make sure that the school's work, its policies, and regular checks of teaching have a stronger focus on how well you are learning. He is also going to provide opportunities for you to say when you want to try harder work. I have asked your teachers to help you to make even better progress by reviewing your learning targets more regularly and checking how well you are learning during lessons. They will give you more challenging work if it is too easy. You can help by always trying your best and continuing to work hard in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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