

The Coppice School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119893
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379901
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Terry McKenzie

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	60
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Woods
Headteacher	Liz Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie
Freda Jackson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed a school assembly and nine lessons taught by seven teachers. Inspectors held meetings with senior managers, other staff, three parents and a member of the governing body. They talked with the pupils, observed the work of the school and scrutinised important policies such as the policy for safeguarding, and other documents including improvement plans and assessment information. The 17 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed as were those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The Coppice School provides for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs that include severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions. Many pupils have additional barriers to learning such as with mobility and communication. Some exhibit challenging behaviour. All have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. There are fewer girls in the school than boys.

Since the previous inspection, work has been undertaken to landscape the school grounds and increase the size of the accommodation. A new outside classroom and a food technology room have been added recently.

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 because pupils achieve well. It has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The Coppice is not yet outstanding because although the quality of teaching is good there are inconsistencies, and therefore pupils do not make as much progress in some lessons as they could.
- All groups of pupils of statutory school age make good progress. Those in the sixth form and the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate outstanding progress. In the upper school, they study for externally accredited courses.
- Teaching is mainly good but varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Teaching is improving because teachers are gaining skills in using assessment information to help them plan lessons that take account of the individual needs of pupils. Recent improvements in the teaching of literacy and numeracy are evident. For example, those pupils who are capable of learning to read are making faster progress with this skill.
- Pupils behave well and their attitudes towards learning are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They enjoy lessons because they are supported well by adults in their relationships, learning and behaviour. Pupils feel safe in school and parents and carers support this view. There are no recorded incidents of bullying. Pupils attend regularly despite their often complex medical conditions.
- Leadership and management are good; in the sixth form and in the Early Years Foundation Stage they are outstanding. Middle leaders are effective in coordinating curriculum improvements and some aspects of the curriculum are outstanding. There is a relentless drive for improvement that is reflected in the school's rigorous monitoring of the performance of all staff. Senior leaders have improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and implemented effective changes to the way that assessments are used.

- The sixth form is outstanding because the very close attention given to the individual needs of the students prepares them extremely well for life after school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - utilise assessment information to establish challenging lesson targets for individual pupils
 - use their planning to make the best use of classroom assistants in lessons to maximize pupils' progress.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment because of their learning difficulties. Pupils' progress in overcoming the barriers to learning caused by their learning difficulties is good. All of the many different groups are successful in their learning. They enjoy coming to school and taking part. The high-quality support of the adults enables them to participate in activities that might otherwise be impossible. For example, pupils were observed using tools and materials successfully to construct photograph frames. This was because classroom staff skilfully provided just the right amount of support. In other less successful lessons, pupils spend too long as part of a large group and opportunities for individual learning are reduced. Where activities are highly individualised, as they often are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the sixth form, pupils make outstanding progress.

The parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire strongly agree that their children make good progress in school. One wrote, 'Since my daughter started she has come on in leaps and bounds!' The parents and carers who met with an inspector reinforced this view. One recounted the success of staff in establishing communication with her child, and that this was key to providing opportunities for learning to occur. Pupils benefit from being at The Coppice for their entire school career because they maintain momentum in their learning as they progress from class to class. Most cannot gain the skills required to read. However, for those who can, the school makes good provision and ensures that the development of their reading is carefully managed through using a range of techniques. Recent developments in the literacy and numeracy curriculum are successful in that pupils' learning in these key areas is improving.

The school is highly cohesive despite the very wide range of needs and the different backgrounds of the pupils. Pupils support each other in classes and during lunchtimes and breaks. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to visit other places so that they can experience the wider world. For example, sixth-formers often learn alongside students in other schools and colleges. Through the thematic nature of the curriculum pupils enjoy a wide range of cultural and spiritual experiences such as the history week that was operating at the time of the inspection. Thus, the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Pupils begin to understand about right and wrong and what is expected of them in different circumstances. They learn to increase their tolerance to different experiences so that they can join in with assemblies and performances, when

previously they might not have been able to cope with larger groups or more lively activities. These aspects of learning represent huge improvements for these pupils.

Quality of teaching

The inspection confirmed the school's own view that teaching is good. In the majority of lessons observed, a wide range of activities were provided that matched the capabilities and learning styles of the pupils. In most lessons, the pace was appropriate and the content lively so that pupils remained interested and engaged. In the outstanding lessons observed, teachers had very clear expectations of the amount of progress that pupils should make even in the space of a lesson. Here, progress was always obvious and pupils responded with great enthusiasm to the challenges set by the teacher. The high ratio of staff to pupils enables those who need assistance to have it. However, teachers do not always provide clear direction to the supporting adults as to the degree of intervention required. Nevertheless, with the help of senior leaders, most teachers set mainly meaningful targets to aid the academic progress and personal development of pupils. Some monitor the performance of pupils regularly so that they become quickly aware if any begin to fall behind. These more sophisticated uses of assessments are particularly evident in sixth-form and Early Years Foundation Stage classes. Occasionally, teachers do not always utilise assessment information to establish challenging lesson targets for individual pupils.

Teachers are skilful in helping pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. For example, mobility aids are tailor-made to help pupils take part in classroom activities. Similarly, electronic communication devices, signing and the use of pictorial language help pupils to participate in question-and-answer sessions. The adults are patient with pupils and understand that some require time to process their thoughts. Thus, most are included in learning and have good opportunities to make progress. During a mathematics lesson, for example, a teacher was observed utilising a wide range of communication and mobility aids to ensure that all pupils in the group could take part in a singing and counting game. All had their turn regardless of their difficulties. Pupils respond positively to the high levels of support and they demonstrate great trust in the adults with whom they work. Where relevant, the teaching of reading is effective. The teaching of basic skills, including reading, is well adapted to pupils' preferred learning styles.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good because their attitudes to learning are good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, behaviour is outstanding. Outside the classroom, pupils usually present themselves in exemplary fashion by being polite and welcoming. When lessons are least effective, pupils are too passive and sometimes their attention wanders. Nevertheless, bad behaviour causes few disruptions to learning. Staff are trained to recognise behavioural triggers and they use de-escalation techniques to reduce the likelihood of physical interventions. Incidents of challenging behaviour were observed during the inspection but these were related to the extreme difficulties that some pupils experience. A few staff expressed concern about behaviour management in the school but the inspectors concluded that these rare behavioural incidents are generally managed appropriately so that all are safe and pupils' learning is not disrupted. There are no recorded incidents of bullying.

School records indicate that pupils' behaviour improves over time. For example, during one lesson observed, a pupil was having difficulty in moving independently from outside to inside the classroom. Eventually, and with the encouragement of staff and classmates he managed

the transition. The school records indicated that only recently has this pupil been able to function in a classroom at all. The attention given by staff to the personal development of pupils is effective so that they learn to manage their own behaviour better. They understand more about the behavioural expectations of society. Pupils report that they enjoy school and that they feel safe. This view is reinforced by the views of parents and carers, some of whom say that through the support of the school the behaviour of their children improves at home. Pupils greatly appreciate the trusting relationships that they form with the adults who support them and this contributes to them wanting to please the staff and demonstrate positive behaviour.

Leadership and management

Effective leadership and management have improved the school since the previous inspection. The monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the school is rigorous. Leaders' have high expectations of staff. For example, teaching is improving because assessments have developed from simply providing summaries of pupils' progress to having a more formative role in the classroom. School leaders now expect teachers to set and monitor targets for pupils. They encourage teachers to use small-step lesson targets so that pupils' progress can be demonstrated quickly and consistently. More recently, senior leaders have devised robust systems that enable them to understand assessments even better. Consequently, they are more confident about tracking the progress of all groups of pupils and individuals. This helps them to ensure that all pupils are fully and equally included in the life of the school and that none are discriminated against. Leaders have led the changes to the school curriculum and have revised and implemented new schemes of work. The early indications of these are that subjects, including literacy and numeracy, are now better planned and more appropriately designed to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. In the sixth form the curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for students to gain qualifications and the skills that they require for moving on to the next stages of their lives.

Senior leaders know the school well and their self-evaluations are largely accurate. They have focused staff training and development onto the key areas of priority such as the improvement of teaching and the use of assessments. Their work has led the promotion of outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural education that has consequently improved the behaviour of students. Thus, there is evidence of continuing good capacity to improve. The arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and the necessary arrangements for the protection of the children and recruitment of staff are in place. The governing body has been instrumental in ensuring that the recent new building work occurred as planned. Members of the governing body recognise that they need to provide better challenge to the senior leaders of the school.

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 The Coppice School, Preston, PR5 6GY

Thank you for making Mrs Jackson and me so welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and seeing you in your classrooms and around the school. We were particularly impressed with your good behaviour and excellent manners, even when you sometimes had difficulty in expressing yourselves. We like the way that you support each other during lessons and at lunchtime.

You have a good school. You make good progress from when you join in the Early Years Foundations Stage to when you leave at the end of the sixth form. In some areas of the school you make outstanding progress. Your literacy and numeracy skills are improving and some of you are learning to read more effectively. We feel that your spiritual, moral, social and cultural outcomes are excellent. This is because you enjoy coming to school and taking part in lessons and other activities. The adults work hard to make sure that you can join in. Teachers plan good, interesting lessons. There are often exciting things to do such as the history week activities that we saw.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher. However, we think that there is always room for improvement so we have asked that the teachers make your lessons even better so that you can learn even more than you do.

Once again, thank you for your interest and help during the inspection. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie
Lead inspector

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