

The Lyndale School

Lyndale Avenue, Eastham, Wirral, Merseyside, CH62 8DE

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils admitted to Lyndale have increasingly profound and complex medical conditions. Staff have developed the skills and knowledge to meet the challenges this presents. As a result, care and support for pupils' well-being are outstanding.
- The achievement of pupils from exceptionally low starting points is good. Staff know the needs of the pupils very well. They plan activities which help pupils make good progress, particularly in their personal development.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Class teams work extremely well together to ensure every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed and make good progress in lessons.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Parents can relax knowing that their children are very safe, happy and well cared for in school.
- Partnerships with parents are outstanding. Parents know that if they have worries there is someone on the teaching or medical staff who will give them advice and support.
- Staff morale in this small school is high, despite uncertainties about the future. This enhances the extremely positive atmosphere in the school.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior staff are continually looking for ways to improve the education and well-being of the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes too much time is spent on whole-class teaching and not enough on learning through individual programmes which are well matched to each pupil's specific learning needs.
- Teaching assistants are not always used as well as they might be in lessons. They support and care for pupils exceptionally well but do not always support the learning so effectively.
- Teachers do not currently have a performance management target linked to pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by six teachers.
- Two of the lessons were paired observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings took place with the senior leadership team, members of the governing body, teachers, a nurse, a physiotherapist and the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, governance, parent questionnaires and pupil progress data.
- A telephone conversation was held with a parent and account was taken of the six responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parent questionnaire and the 18 completed staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Lyndale provides education for a small number of pupils with exceptionally severe and profound learning difficulties and disabilities. A large majority of the pupils have medical conditions which may be life-limiting.
- Most pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties and very little mobility. A small number have hearing and/or visual impairment. A majority of pupils require gastrostomy feeding and many pupils need medical interventions during the school day.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- A small proportion of pupils are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The Lyndale is currently subject to a review of special educational needs provision in Wirral.
- A number of awards have been achieved including Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark Gold, Bike It, Intermediate International Award and Activemark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning to increase the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - less whole-class teaching and more time spent learning through individualised programmes
 - allowing pupils more time to absorb and process new experiences and information
 - developing the teaching assistants' role to deliver and secure learning through pupils' individual programmes.
- Raise expectations of what pupils can achieve even higher by ensuring there is a strong link between the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in teachers' performance management targets.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- All parents and staff agree that pupils make at least good progress at The Lyndale School. For many pupils, who have regressive conditions, maintaining skills already gained is a major achievement.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage generally start with exceptionally poor skills. They quickly settle and thrive in a rich and stimulating setting with excellent resources. As a result of the outstanding care and support they receive from staff, the children begin to move slowly forward. A very few children make more rapid progress and occasionally move on to alternative schools.
- Pupils' learning is in very small steps which are carefully observed and tracked. Some pupils who are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium have been provided with more support to access the curriculum and this has resulted in improved achievement.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in their communication skills. This is because a total communication approach is used, whereby pupils' understanding is supported through whatever form of communication makes most sense to each individual. Pupils begin to respond to, and some are able to use, sign, symbols, objects of reference, photographs, real objects, switches and other technology aids to make simple choices and express their basic needs and wishes.
- Pupils begin to understand about cause and effect through, for example, pressing a switch to get a visual reward or to enjoy a piece of music.
- The very small number of pupils who are able to begin to recognise letters and sounds are supported through well-planned work and advice from a mainstream primary school, so that they are able to make good progress with their literacy skills.
- Progress in numeracy develops slowly but steadily according to a pupil's individual ability.
- Pupils make exceptionally good progress in their personal and social development because staff know them so well. They are supported to actively join in lessons and try new experiences, such as tasting of some exotic foods in a lesson about Mexico.
- Pupils' achievement is not outstanding because sometimes teachers spend too long teaching the whole class and this restricts the progress pupils might make through more individualised learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching meets the range of pupils' needs well. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at recognising their pupils' slightest responses, such as reactions to light and sound sources or to tactile materials.
- Lessons are well planned to provide a wealth of sensory experiences for pupils. Occasionally, however, in their enthusiasm, teachers offer too much in one lesson. When this happens pupils are not always given enough time to absorb and make sense of new stimuli in order to learn from them effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in class teams work exceptionally well together. In the best lessons teaching assistants become teachers too, and pupils are taught through individual programmes which are well matched to their needs and interests. Occasionally, although teaching assistants provide exceptional care for pupils' well-being, they are less well used to support pupils' learning.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught at an appropriate level matched to the pupils' ability. Songs, especially number songs such as 'five fat sausages', are used to interest pupils and to help them remember number sequences. The school arranges for a few children of higher ability to work alongside primary mainstream pupils where this is appropriate.

- Nursing and therapy professionals are always available in the school. They work in classrooms alongside class staff to make sure pupils' welfare and medical needs are very well met. Teachers and teaching assistants develop knowledge and skills to support the medical needs of their pupils in school and to enable them to make frequent trips into the community.
- The good teaching is supported by some excellent resources. Specialist support helps teachers to develop pupils' access to technology in the well-resourced information and communication technology room, in the dark room and in the sensory suite. As a result, pupils begin to develop good skills in the use of technology. For example, a pupil was able to indicate his responses to various smells by using a four-switch system. He could use his switches to say that he liked or disliked the smell, that he wanted to smell it again or that he had had enough and wanted to finish the session.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils love to come to school. Parents and carers of these very vulnerable children are primarily concerned that their children are safe, happy and well cared for. Responses on Parent View and to the school's own questionnaire indicate that all parents have complete confidence that this is the case.
- Attendance is extraordinarily good in the light of pupils' health and medical needs. Nursing and teaching staff work hard to get children back into school as quickly as possible after bouts of ill-health or time in hospital. They provide support and reassurance to parents for their child's return to school. Where appropriate, and necessary, the school provides some home teaching.
- Pupils try hard in lessons and want to do well. Staff are highly skilled in watching out for small-change responses and take pride in the pupils' achievements. Records show that they manage the behaviours, which might be associated with the pupils' disabilities, exceptionally well so that they never disrupt learning.
- The nature of their learning difficulties and disabilities means that many of the pupils lack awareness of others' needs, but bullying does not occur. Pupils are encouraged to respond to each other and enjoy the relationships they share with staff. In a whole-school assembly pupils demonstrated very clearly that they enjoyed being part of the school community. They joined in songs by smiling, clapping or waving their arms around to the music.
- The vast majority of pupils are wheelchair users and they enjoy using the welcoming and accessible outdoor environment. Pupils are encouraged to play their part in making decisions for the school. For instance, the school council has suggested ideas to develop the sensory garden such as switches for owl-hoots, fountains and the sound of running water.
- As pupils move up the school, topics such as bullying and personal safety are introduced, in practical ways that pupils will understand and in collaboration with parents.

The leadership and management are good

- Despite uncertainties about the future for the school, leaders and managers, including the governing body, remain ambitious for its profoundly disabled pupils. The school is very well regarded in the local community.
- The local authority is confident that the school meets the needs of its pupils very well and provides only minimum support.
- Partnerships with parents are outstanding. Parents are grateful to the school for the support it provides to them as well as to their children. As one parent put it, 'Not only do they look after our daughter but the whole family as well; we are always made welcome'.
- Although the staff team is small, very good support is given to staff training and development which are well linked to school improvement planning. For instance, staff have recently improved the way that pupils' individual education plan targets are included in lesson plans. However, at

present teachers' targets aimed at improving the quality of teaching are not linked to improved pupil achievement and pay progression, although this is planned for the future.

- The school's recent review of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and planning for further improvement involves all staff and governors.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils' personal and social development, together with the development of communication, is of the utmost importance and is included in all aspects of the curriculum.
- All pupils in the school are extremely vulnerable but the small amount of additional funding made available through the pupil premium is monitored well to ensure it is used effectively for those who are most disadvantaged. Providing pupils with an equal opportunity to succeed is at the heart of all the school does.
- Multi-disciplinary support is essential to meet the very complex needs of the pupils. The various professionals based at the school work exceptionally well together to ensure consistent support and care are provided to enable pupils to learn effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors have reviewed their own performance and inform themselves through visits to the school. As a result, they are able to hold the school's headteacher and her staff to account effectively. They understand and share in the school improvement planning and know the school's strengths and areas for development. Members of the governing body have been very involved in discussions with the local authority about future provision.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105136
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	400759

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	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Harney
Headteacher	Pat Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2010
Telephone number	0151 327 3682
Fax number	0151 327 1931
Email address	headteacher@lyndale.wirral.sch.uk

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