

INSPECTION REPORT

NETLEY COURT SCHOOL

Netley, Southampton

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 116620

Headteacher: Jackie Partridge

Reporting inspector: Jed Donnelly
23637

Dates of inspection: 13th - 15th January 2003

Inspection number: 249364

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Victoria Road Netley Abbey Southampton
Postcode:	SO31 5DR
Telephone number:	023 8045 3259
Fax number:	023 8045 5438
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Hunt
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Netley Court School is a maintained special school for pupils with complex learning difficulties. All pupils have a language and communication difficulty and some have severe, complex medical needs and/or sensory loss. Currently all pupils are ambulant. There are 43 pupils aged between five and 11, 38 boys and 5 girls. Pupils are currently taught in five classes appropriate to their age range. Four pupils are from a minority ethnic background and three have English as an additional language. This reflects the pattern of the catchment area served by the school. Twelve pupils have free school meals. The local area is one of a favourable social and economic circumstance. Attainment on entry is in line with similar schools for pupils with complex learning needs. Since the last inspection, the needs of the pupils have changed. During the last inspection, the majority of the pupils had moderate learning difficulties. During the week of the inspection, over half of the pupils now have very complex learning difficulties, including severe autistic spectrum disorder, which includes specific communication delay. These pupils are based in the younger classes and the more able pupils in the two older classes. The recently appointed headteacher has been in post for two terms. Currently, the school is engaged in the local authority's consultation process to discuss future special school provision.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Netley Court is a very good school. Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result, pupils make very good progress, particularly in their independence skills. Leadership and management at all levels are also very good. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It provides very good standards of teaching and learning support in lessons; as a result pupils make very good progress, develop confidence and self-esteem in their abilities and develop high levels of independence.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and the quality of teamwork in all classes are outstanding. Staff know their pupils very well and, as a result, pupils are secure and respond very well to the challenges offered to them.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are very good. They enjoy their work and try hard in lessons. Behaviour management plans are very thorough and are consistently applied across the school.
- A very good curriculum is matched very well to the needs of the pupils and is clearly focused on raising self-esteem and confidence. Strategies for developing pupils' early communication skills are very effective.
- The standard of care for pupils is very good and the assessment of pupils' achievement and progress is very effective.
- Leadership and management are very good, leading to an awareness of what works well in the school but also a knowledge of what needs improving and how to do it.

What could be improved

- Specialist accommodation for younger pupils with complex learning needs.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997 and has made good progress in addressing the Key Issues and weaknesses identified at that time. The school very successfully placed all pupils with autistic tendencies into other classes rather than having them taught separately. There is now no unit attached to the school for these pupils and the provision made for educational inclusion is very good. *Multicultural* provision has improved and is now good. The high standards have been maintained within the context of

a changing pupil population and a Local Education Authority review of special schools. The capacity for the school to improve further is very good.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 2	By Year 6	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
Reading	A	A	good	B
Writing	A	A	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	A	A	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The school has set challenging individual targets for pupils and pupils have made very good progress in learning overall throughout the school. Their progress in English (early communication) and mathematics is very good in relation to their starting points. Pupils make very good gains in personal and social development because all staff have a common purpose and see this as a central part of their work. Pupils' progress in science is good. The school recognises that the use of ICT across all subjects is not fully developed. The National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy are well adapted to meet the specific needs of the pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and show very positive attitudes to all aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good overall. Younger pupils are secure in their known classroom routines. Older pupils relate very well to each other and to staff.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils make outstanding progress in independence and developing life skills. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. Punctuality is usually good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 - 2	Years 3 - 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh the weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good and, as a result, the needs of all the pupils are very well met. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the special needs of their pupils. Basic skills of numeracy and literacy are taught well. The teaching of early communication skills using the picture exchange communication system is very effective and, as a result, these younger pupils learn very well. All teachers have high expectations and are assisted by very experienced and very effective support staff. The use of signing and other visual clues to learning is developing very well and is effective in supporting pupils' learning overall. There is very good organisation of group work across the school and teachers' planning is at a very high level, ensuring activities promote both academic learning and personal development. The pace and challenge offered to older pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are very good and sometimes excellent. In a very few lessons, insufficient use of objects of reference or other visual aids to support pupils' understanding of the task slows the pace of learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very relevant to the needs of the two very distinct groups of pupils and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The needs of the small number of such pupils are well assessed and provided for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The school makes good provision for spiritual development through well-planned assemblies and opportunities for reflection within lessons. There are very good opportunities also for developing independence and personal skills. The school council, although new, is working well. In addition, the school provides good opportunities for pupils to understand the richness and diversity of other religious beliefs and ethnic groups and takes adequate steps through its policies to combat racism.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school procedures for supporting pupils meet all necessary requirements for child protection and ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in the school. There are very effective systems to assess attainment and progress and this information is used well in setting individual targets. Pupils are well supervised and their needs are very well known and addressed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and together with her deputy, ensures that the school is very well managed at all levels. There is appropriate planning for improvement in the short term and the school is well placed to respond to the local authority's consultation on special school reorganisation.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well and strongly supports the work of the school, ensuring that statutory requirements are met and that the school continues to develop well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school effectively monitors its performance. The headteacher, staff and governors are very clear about what works well in the school and also what needs improving.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its budget wisely. They take account of its spending decisions after reflection and analysis. The administration of the school by the office staff is of a very high quality. The accommodation overall is unsatisfactory, lacking sufficient primary care facilities and limited

	purpose-built multi-sensory teaching areas for pupils with severe autistic tendencies.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The progress their children make.• The high expectations the school has for pupils.• The very good leadership by the headteacher.• The approachability of the school when they have problems to discuss.• Their children's enthusiasm for the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation overall. Two classes are in portable classrooms, and there are no specialist multi-sensory teaching areas.

The inspection team endorses the positive views of parents. The inspection team also agrees with parents about the limited accommodation for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder now and as they move up into the mobile classrooms and the impact this could have on their learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

It provides very good standards of teaching and learning support in lessons; as a result, pupils make very good progress, develop confidence and self-esteem in their abilities and develop high levels of confidence.

1. The proportion of very good teaching is a strength of the school. Major factors in achieving this high quality are the very good planning for teaching, the use of assessment information to match lessons to the needs of pupils and the very good guidance and support provided by the skilled team of support staff in the classrooms.
2. The school has made very good use of adapting the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in planning its work. In a literacy lesson with the youngest pupils in the school, many of whom have autistic tendencies, pupils learn about the different kinds of farm animals. Through the use of the big book "Animals 123", pupils match the noises of animals to the appropriate pictures. Learning is very well supported by signing systems, in which classroom assistants take a very active part in supporting pupils in their learning, providing appropriate support and challenge when necessary. For example, younger pupils are reminded to check their individual timetables during periods of transition from one activity to the next and support staff are always available, allowing pupils some independence, whilst at other times being very clear about the expectations for learning and behaviour. All staff use the individual pupils' own picture vocabulary book to support them in their understanding of the task ahead.
3. The organisation of group work is outstanding and is used to relate work clearly to individual needs, both educational and personal. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils are grouped in order to maximise the learning opportunities and pupils are challenged and supported by their classmates and support staff. At the end of the lesson, great fun is had by each group sharing their learning with each other, very well managed by the class teacher in cooperation with her support staff.
4. In an excellent literacy lesson in Year 5, the pace, very high expectations and quality planning ensure pupils are on task and fully focused on the learning objective ie "to produce a short, factual report demonstrating the ability to use a glossary to obtain factual information". For example, the teacher set the scene about a local news report live on the television in which dinosaurs were running loose in Netley village. This grabbed pupils' attention and motivated them to excel in their reports of such news.
5. Support staff are very experienced and provide outstanding commitment to the pupils and staff. They enjoy their work and provide a very solid basis on which the school can improve further. The quality of such work is a key strength of the school. They make a very positive contribution to the very good progress pupils make.
6. The use of signing systems overall is good but it is not yet consistent across the school. The school recognises this and it is an area for further development, as identified in the strategic plan. In the two older classes, a key feature in teaching and learning is the very high expectations of staff and the very good match of work to the needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils are very well motivated, develop confidence and enjoy success, which further enhances their self-esteem.

Relationships between staff and pupils and the quality of teamwork in all classes are outstanding. Staff know their pupils very well and, as a result, pupils are secure and respond very well to the challenges offered to them.

7. The relationship between staff and pupils is of the highest quality. As a result, teamwork between all staff in classes is very good. This quality is partly responsible for the very high standards of teaching and pupil welfare. Class teams meet formally at least once a week to review individual

pupils' progress, classroom management and organisation and to set further challenges to pupils' learning.

8. A number of support staff have identified roles in supporting individual pupils in their class, but the whole staff team are able to suggest areas that work well and also what needs improving. Pupils demonstrate trust in the adults supporting their learning and, as a result, they try very hard and respond very well to the challenge that staff prepare for them. Parents are also an integral part of the success of the school and they have very high confidence in the ability of the school staff.

Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are very good. They enjoy their work and try hard in lessons. Behaviour management plans are very thorough and are consistently applied across the school.

9. On arrival at school, pupils are met by staff when the home to school transport arrives. All pupils are very eager to meet their teachers and their friends. Older pupils run across the playground full of enthusiasm for and anticipation of the days events. At break times, pupils play happily and calmly, relating well to support staff before entering the building in an orderly manner. Older pupils become focused as they enter the classroom and most organise themselves well. During lessons, pupils work well whether by themselves, in small or class groups, or in pairs. Pupils frequently show a lot of enthusiasm for learning and very good concentration during lessons. A Year 2/3 art lesson, which is very well planned and very well matched to pupils' needs, motivates pupils to do their best. As a result of this quality, pupils are fully engaged in learning and inappropriate behaviour is not evident.
10. Behaviour is very good and pupils of all ages relate well to one another and to staff, both in lessons and around the school as a result of the very clear, familiar and well understood routines of the day. This, together with the systematic and well planned help they receive, makes many of them into confident learners.

A very good curriculum is matched very well to the needs of the pupils, clearly focused on raising self-esteem and confidence. Strategies for developing pupils' early communication skills are very effective.

11. The curriculum is very relevant to the needs and abilities of pupils in the school, meets statutory requirements and makes a very positive contribution to the very good progress pupils make.
12. Younger pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are very well supported in their learning through the use of a practical approach to teaching using a wide variety of artefacts, visual aids and well understood routines and work schedules. Pupils make choices and follow instructions through the use of pictorial timetables, so developing their independence skills.
13. Older pupils are very well challenged by high quality teaching and a curriculum that reinforce pupils' achievements as well as evaluating what needs improving and develops self-esteem. The focus on developing early communication skills is a high priority and the school's strategies are very effective.

The standard of care for pupils is very good and the assessment of pupils' achievement and progress is very effective.

14. Pupils are well cared for, both physically and academically, as a result of high quality teamwork but also of the very good systems to keep pupils safe at school and of the very clear knowledge and insights that staff have about pupils.
15. A key feature in the success of the school is the use made of assessment to plan lessons. Teachers are closely involved in using the school's assessment data and are skilled in developing teaching strategies related to individual targets. All targets are screened on a half termly basis and new ones set in the light of the progress made.

16. For older pupils, classroom organisation into groups by ability in Literacy and Numeracy is kept under review and pupils are moved on as new standards are reached. The school keeps a full set of data on each pupil's progress through the school using the individual plans as a basis to improve teaching and learning.
17. Child protection procedures are very good. All journeys to and from the school are carefully planned with regard to national and local guidance and necessary risk assessment taken.

Leadership and management are very good, leading to an awareness of what works well in the school but also a knowledge of what needs improving and how to do it.

18. The headteacher is a very good leader and a very good manager and key staff are very effective in carrying out their duties. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead by example; they are ready to take effective action and always insist on very high standards for pupils' behaviour and learning, based on high expectations of all staff. The headteacher is currently networking very effectively with others outside the school to gain resources for the continuing success of the pupils in order to raise standards further.
19. Key features of her management are monitoring and support of teaching and its effectiveness in promoting pupils' learning, the development of the very good systems which are used consistently throughout the school and the clear procedures for delegation of key management functions. Through the headteacher's own evaluations of teaching, together with the appropriate support and challenge to established practices, a number of new appointments to the teaching staff have been made. The headteacher is very clear about what needs to be done next and the goal of becoming a school with a "total communication environment" is one that is readily achievable.
20. Strategies to train teachers in new skills and improve their effectiveness are well organised. The effective mentoring system is highly regarded by new members of staff. The school policy is to meet school needs as well as to enable individual members of staff to develop further professional skills and knowledge. Consequently, the school has focused on training to implement national strategies to raise achievement, alongside training for meeting the needs of learning difficulties new to the school, such as autism and severe communication delay. The school monitors the effectiveness of the training through feedback from staff as well as improvements made in progress by pupils.
21. The governing body, particularly the chair of governors, provides very good support for the school's management and is meeting its statutory responsibilities. Jointly, the governing body, the senior management team and the administrative officer have a very clear view and understanding of expenditure and budget availability in relation to what they seek to buy and the impact it will have on the progress made by the pupils.
22. The outreach activities of the school provide it with a very wide range of benchmarks against which to assess the effectiveness of its own provision.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Specialist accommodation for younger pupils with complex learning needs.

23. There are insufficient primary care facilities for younger pupils and the main building has no wheelchair access at all. Currently there are no pupils or staff who need wheelchair access attending this special school. There are no toilets in the mobile classrooms and pupils have to use the main building; this is unsatisfactory.
24. There are no specialist teaching areas for pupils with autistic tendencies, insufficient specialist soft play area and no hydrotherapy pool or multi-sensory provision to further support pupils' language development as they move through the school. These are significant weaknesses and restrict the further progress pupils might make.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to enhance the overall educational provision, the school should seek ways to improve the accommodation by:

- improving the number and quality of primary care facilities for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorder;
- providing relevant multi-sensory specialist teaching areas and ensure access to all facilities for non-ambulant pupils, including wheelchair access.

(paragraphs 24 – 25)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	6	6	2	0	0	0
Percentage	12.5	37.5	37.5	12.5	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	43
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
39	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.2
Average class size	8.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y1 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	503

Financial information

Financial year	2001/ 2202
	£
Total income	734,654
Total expenditure	726,881
Expenditure per pupil	9,086
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,171
Balance carried forward to next year	43,943

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	44
Number of questionnaires returned	16

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	13	0	0	6
My child is making good progress in school.	69	31	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	25	0	6	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	44	6	0	13
The teaching is good.	88	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	25	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	94	6	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	69	31	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	94	6	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	19	0	0	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	19	19	6	13