



Inspection report

# Thomas Bewick School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 131988  
LEA Newcastle Upon Tyne

Inspection number 273643  
Inspection dates 2 and 3 March 2005  
Reporting inspector Ms A Berger HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Special	School address	Hillhead Parkway
School category	Community		Walbottle
			Newcastle Upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	4 to 19 Years		NE5 1DP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 267 5435
Number on roll	53	Fax number	0191 267 9857
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms M J Menzies
Date of previous inspection	May 2003	Headteacher	Mr G MacLeod

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 19 years	20 April 2005	273643

## Introduction

When Thomas Bewick School was inspected in May 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2005.

### Description of the school

Thomas Bewick is a day and residential special school with 53 pupils on roll, located on the northern edge of Newcastle Upon Tyne. The school opened in September 1999, following a re-organisation by the local education authority (LEA), when pupils from three previous schools were brought together. In September 2004 a nursery and Foundation Stage unit was opened on the site of the residential home. The school is due to move in July 2007, when a new school for 90 pupils is to be opened.

Most pupils are from white British backgrounds; 31 per cent are eligible for free school meals. This is about average for schools of this type. Many pupils have severe learning difficulties, behavioural or psychological disorders; all have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. Their attainment on entry is well below average.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Thomas Bewick School is providing a good education for its pupils. The positive ethos and determined leadership from the headteacher and the senior team, effective teaching and good strategies to support communication have resulted in rising standards. The school has promoted many active approaches to learning and behaviour is well managed; as a result, relationships are good. The curriculum provides a wide range of good opportunities for pupils to learn; it is broad, balanced and relevant to their needs. There are many good opportunities for pupils to become involved in the life of the community, although too little is done to promote their inclusion in mainstream schools. The quality of teaching is mostly good or better and staff have worked very hard to engage all the pupils in learning. However, the non-teaching staff do not provide consistently good support for pupils to ensure they are able to participate fully in lessons.

### Effectiveness of the school's sixth form

The school's sixth form is very effective as a result of the excellent leadership of the assistant headteacher. The pupils have a wide range of opportunities which are very well matched to their individual needs, and where weaknesses have been identified they are addressed swiftly.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of May 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with leadership and management, governance, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, health and safety, accommodation and the partnership with parents. There has been good progress in all areas since the appointment of the new headteacher in April 2004.

### Capacity to improve

The school is very well placed to sustain and build on improvements. Governors and the senior leadership team make good decisions based on a very careful audit of the school's position. For example, the headteacher took care, when reviewing the school's child protection practices, to identify good practice in another LEA and use this as a basis for measuring the school's own performance. As a result, weaknesses were clearly identified and action was taken where necessary.

The budget has been well managed and the school is on track to repay the remaining deficit by 2007. The LEA has agreed to return full delegated powers at the start of the new financial year and the governors are in a good position to resume these responsibilities.

Five of the ten teachers have been appointed since the last monitoring visit and some have had limited experience of teaching pupils with such significant and complex needs. However, they have been well inducted, good professional development has been provided, and they have risen to the challenge of their new roles. The arrangements for line management have ensured that most are making at least satisfactory provision for their classes and that concerns are addressed.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- improve the quality, use and deployment of the non-teaching staff;
- use information about what the pupils already know to raise expectations further and improve the progress the pupils make;
- provide greater opportunities for the pupils to work alongside their mainstream peers and consider a greater level of inclusion in preparation for the new school.

## Achievement and standards

Many pupils face considerable barriers to learning and the school is successful in removing many of these. Standards are rising in nearly all classes as a result of higher expectations, and a few of the older pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations in some areas of learning, particularly in art, music and aspects of work-related learning and citizenship. Though most pupils do not achieve the nationally expected levels, they make good progress overall. However, the rise in standards is limited in a few lessons due to weaknesses in the development of the sensory curriculum. There is a lack of clarity about the purposes of the sensory room, massage and other therapies, and this reduces their effectiveness.

In the Foundation Stage and nursery the pupils are beginning to respond well to a range of stimuli and they use symbols and speech to communicate their choices. This is further developed throughout the school, and many more pupils are able to use language and symbols to engage more fully in all their lessons. The pupils have made significant progress in their communication skills and many use symbols and sentence makers to express choices and views. Numeracy skills are also developing well for most pupils as progress in mathematics is planned for systematically throughout the school.

## Personal development

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The pupils make a substantial contribution to the community. There are many opportunities

to develop an understanding of other cultures as well as their own; for example, in the excellent art work celebrating the Chinese New Year and the fund raising link with a school in Sri Lanka. The school has identified assemblies as a strength and this regular weekly opportunity to enhance the pupils' spiritual development is highly praised in the LEA's recent monitoring report.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour and they are helped by very good behaviour management plans which are implemented consistently. Careful attention is given in the daily briefings to discussing the pupils' individual behavioural needs and problems are usually prevented in this way. All staff have had suitable training in restraint, and the policies are nearly always implemented well. Where weaknesses are observed they are dealt with effectively. A few pupils with very challenging behaviour are using their new communication strategies to work towards specifically agreed rewards, and this is very effective.

Attendance and punctuality are good. The school is aware of any reasons for absence and effective action is taken where necessary.

The school has recently taken steps to improve the quality of the food provided and healthy eating is promoted in food technology lessons. The personal, social and health education lessons, together with the pupils' individual plans, ensure they learn about how to stay safe; child protection procedures are good. Risks are assessed well and rigorous monitoring ensures that pupils do not put themselves or others in danger. Partnerships with parents have improved considerably. There is careful liaison about pupils on transition and regular communication about the pupils' progress. Parents are becoming more active in the life of the school.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is good overall. It was excellent in three lessons, good or very good in four, satisfactory in two, and unsatisfactory in one. This much improved situation is due largely to the hard work and commitment of the new teachers, and the good monitoring and support by the curriculum management team who themselves are outstanding classroom practitioners. Planning for lessons is good and activities are nearly always effective in promoting the intended learning.

Nevertheless, there are some remaining weaknesses. The new teachers are not always effective in deploying the large team of non-teaching staff who sometimes lack initiative and fail to implement the agreed plans.

There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing of the pupils' progress, although much remains to be done to ensure this information is used to guide lesson-planning and that assessments are consistent and moderated across the school.

The school is developing its system for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The information obtained when the pupils arrive in the school is often inadequate, and the

evaluation of their progress over time in each of the curriculum areas is beginning to be better developed.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a very wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their physical, creative, social and vocational skills. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools.

The planned new accommodation is at an early stage of development; further attention should be given to how the school will develop together with the other schools on the same site.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher provides very good leadership and the school is well managed. He has a systematic approach to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and very good management and organisational skills. He has been very well supported by the assistant headteacher who has developed a good range of management skills which she has used to drive forward the many essential changes. The curriculum management team has also been effective in bringing about the major improvements to the planning and delivery of the curriculum. Most curriculum leaders have only recently begun working in the school, but they are beginning to take on greater responsibility for supporting their colleagues and monitoring the progress the pupils make.

Governance is very good. The chair of governors has led the governing body very well and taken responsibility for progress with a number of issues, particularly in relation to improving the relationships with other agencies. The whole governing body is actively involved in evaluating the progress the school makes. They understand their responsibilities well and are very effective in assuring the quality of decisions. The LEA has agreed to return full delegated powers at the start of the new financial year.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Thomas Bewick School was inspected in March 2003 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in December 2003, and in March and July 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2003.

In March 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Ten lessons were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, the curriculum management team, the teacher in charge of the Stepping Stones reception, a group of teachers new to the school, representatives from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of May 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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