



The Pioneer School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 134100
LEA Essex

Inspection number 274780
Inspection dates 13 - 14 June 2005
Reporting inspector Jacque Cook

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Special	School address	Church Road
School category	Community special		Basildon, Essex
Age range of pupils	3 - 19		SS14 2NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 522077
Number on roll	126	Fax number	01268 533214
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Pamela Stanley
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection	Headteacher	Mr Steve Horsted

Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 - 19	July 2005	274780

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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of The Pioneer School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Pioneer School was newly formed in September 2003 following the amalgamation of two special schools. Two thirds of the pupils have severe and complex needs and a third has moderate learning difficulties. Due to the special educational needs of the pupils, attainment on entry is low and often very low. There are approximately twice as many boys as girls. All pupils have statements of special educational needs, apart from a few children in the Foundation Stage who are undergoing assessment. About 27 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the vast majority live in the local area of Basildon. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Ten are from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

The overall effectiveness of the school is judged by the school and inspectors to be satisfactory. The work of the new school is based on a clear vision which is shared by the staff. The leadership and management, including the governance, are satisfactory and improvements are guided by a satisfactory school development plan. Priorities are identified accurately through self evaluation, including the improvement of information and communication technology (ICT), the training of staff in dealing with pupils with difficult behaviour and the accuracy of target setting. There are weaknesses in the rigour of monitoring by the school and the governing body. Teaching and learning have improved to satisfactory, but there is room for further improvement. Pupils make satisfactory progress. The personal development and well being of pupils are good and the school works well in partnership with care, medical and social services staff to promote the well being of the pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and suitably matched to pupils' needs. The care guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory.

The quality of education and the progress made at the Foundation stage are good. Children are taught well by a very effective staff team and good links with the therapists contribute to the achievement of the children. Links with parents are good and ensure achievements are celebrated at home and in school.

The capacity to improve further is satisfactory. There is a clear direction, teaching and learning are satisfactory but better teaching would result in better progress for the pupils. Value for money is satisfactory.

Grade: 3

Effectiveness and efficiency of Post-16

The school accurately judges the Post-16 provision to be good. Students make good progress because of the careful work to improve their basic skills through a wide range of activities in a well planned curriculum. They improve personally and socially. The quality of teaching and learning is good and

students are well supported in their lessons. Students are increasingly independent and when they leave they are ready for the next stage which is often attending college.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- Introducing rigour into monitoring procedures to improve the quality of teaching and learning more rapidly.
- Improving pupils' progress through increasing staff skills in teaching (ICT) and in managing difficult behaviour appropriately.
- Improving the quality of target setting for individual pupils' achievement.
- Improving the accommodation at the Elmbrook site in conjunction with the Local Education Authority.

Achievement and standards

The special educational needs of the pupils mean that their attainment is low and often very low when they join the school. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 make satisfactory progress in the subjects they study, apart from in ICT which is not used well enough in lessons to give them sufficient practice. The higher quality of the teaching and learning contributes towards the good progress made by children in the Foundation Stage. Students in Years 12 to 14 also make good progress because they too are well taught and their curriculum is well planned. The school's evaluation captures this picture and identifies the differences in achievement correctly.

There is a new scheme for setting targets based on key skills, which is being refined as staff gain more experience in using the system. Initial data indicate that so far, targets have not always been sufficiently well defined to allow clear assessment of progress. However, more recently, satisfactory progress has been made in meeting suitably difficult targets in individual education plans. The focus on the learning of individual pupils ensures that on the whole there are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups,

including those who are looked after by the local authority. However, the learning of a few pupils with very difficult behaviour is, at times, unsatisfactory because there are not sufficient consistent strategies to prevent them from disrupting lessons.

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through their learning in lessons such as personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education. They enjoy coming to school; even the children in the nursery, many of whom have not been in school for long, greet their staff enthusiastically each day. Attitudes to learning are good with many developing good levels of concentration and interest in their work. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory, although a few pupils are persistent non-attenders in spite of the efforts of the school and the educational welfare service. On the whole, pupils' behaviour is good. They are well mannered and considerate of others. A few find it difficult to behave well and other pupils complain, saying that there are instances of bad behaviour which inhibit their learning.

The well being of the pupils is at the heart of the work of the school and as a result, pupils feel safe and learn well about adopting safe practices. Their participation in the National Healthy Schools initiative effectively supports pupils' understanding, as far as they are able, of a healthy life style. They make a good contribution to their community, for example, by growing plants as part of the horticulture sessions, to improve the environment. Throughout their schooling, pupils develop social and economic skills at appropriate levels through using community facilities and learning about the world of work.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, which matches the school's evaluation. However, although there has been improvement, there remains a range from good to unsatisfactory, which is partly due to a lack of rigour in the monitoring by senior staff. They are successful in identifying unsatisfactory areas of teaching. As a result, staff training has been well targeted to increase skills, but there remain gaps in the expertise and confidence of a number of members of staff in teaching ICT and in managing extreme behaviour. In all lessons, praise and encouragement are used skilfully to help pupils develop and maintain interest in activities and enjoy their lessons.

In the nursery and in the Post-16 provision, the quality of teaching and learning are good. The staff that work with the children and the students form effective teams and provide a high level of support but ensure pupils develop their independence well.

In almost all instances where the quality of teaching and learning are good, pupils' work is assessed well and this information is used to plan future activities effectively. This leads to work that is well matched to the pupils' needs, often at different levels in the same class. Pupils' learning is unsatisfactory when they are given the same activity, as it is often too easy for some and too difficult for others.

Grade: 3

Curriculum and other activities

The curriculum is suitable and matches the needs and abilities of most pupils. There is appropriate provision of work planned specifically for pupils with complex needs, based on using as many of the senses as possible to help them learn. The curriculum for children in the nursery is good and based well on the areas of learning so they have a good start to their education. A new, tailor made curriculum for students in the Post- 16 classes is very well planned and prepares them very well for when they leave school.

The focus on key skills for the targets for many pupils in their individual education plans ensures they are taught a broad range of specific areas. The PSHE and citizenship courses provide appropriate safety and health education. The range of accredited courses is suitable and includes entry level certificates and two levels of the Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The college link course for pupils in Years 10 and 11 gives them a good experience of adult education, and as a result, many of the more able pupils transfer to college at age 16. Visits outside school and visitors to the school enrich pupils' learning as do additional activities such as the after school clubs. Social and personal development is improved through the residential visit and from experiences provided by outdoor pursuits.

Grade: 3**Care, guidance and support**

Staff take appropriate steps to ensure that the pupils are well cared for. They are very conscious of potential hazards and ensure that all pupils understand the danger, for example, of hot food. As a result pupils are able to participate in activities that they may find challenging. The additional needs of many pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are catered for well. Procedures for child protection are carefully followed and there are clear systems in force for checking the suitability of staff. However, teachers and support staff do not have the requisite up-to-date training to deal with extreme behaviour appropriately and safely.

The school works effectively with most parents and with other agencies as part of the 'Joined Up Planning' which is a positive feature. Pupils' progress is regularly checked and advice and guidance is given. Future options are explored, such as appropriate college courses and pupils are supported well when they are in the community.

Grade: 3

Leadership and management

The leadership and management are satisfactory. Much has been done and is continuing to be done, to form a united staff team since the amalgamation two years ago. This is achieved through the sharing of the very clear vision for the New Model Special School which is taking shape. The close working and integration of the care, medical and education services are already supporting the learning and well being of the pupils. Strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified through the school's satisfactory self evaluation processes. Suspected weaknesses in the quality of teaching, for example, were confirmed by a requested monitoring by Local Education Authority officers and a comprehensive package of support provided to make improvements. The school's own monitoring of teaching and learning is adequate, but lacks a rigorous focus on improving quality of teaching. As a result the capacity of the school to improve further is satisfactory rather than good, as stated in the school self evaluation.

Views of professionals that work in the school and those of parents are sought and contribute towards the evaluation of the effectiveness of any changes. Consequently, the school improvement plan has a clear focus on improving provision and sets appropriate targets for the future. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and question and debate decisions appropriately, however, their monitoring is not capitalised on sufficiently. Genuine concerns raised by a few parents have been followed up by the school and steps taken to make improvements. These include the accommodation at the Elmbrook site which is unsatisfactory. Corridors are too narrow and toileting facilities are inadequate.

Grade: 3

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	N/A	N/A

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Delete as appropriate
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Delete as appropriate
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Delete as appropriate
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Delete as appropriate
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	Yes

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Pioneer School
Church Road
Basildon
Essex

14 June 2005

Dear pupils,

We very much enjoyed seeing how well you are doing and we also enjoyed talking with some of you both in and out of lessons. Thank you very much for all the help you gave us.

This is what we found out:

- You try hard and most of you are good in school.
- You are making the progress you should in your work.
- You told us that you enjoy school, especially the extra activities like the President's Sports Day.
- The school is fine.
- Teaching needs to be even better.
- More work needs to be done on ICT.
- More help needs to be given to some of you so that everyone behaves well in lessons and do not stop other pupils working.
- Your targets need to be clearer.
- The Elmbrook building needs to be made better.

Best wishes

Jacque Cook
Lead inspector