



Strathmore School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102954
LEA Richmond Upon Thames LEA
Inspection number 276796
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 7 February 2006
Reporting inspector Greg Sorrell AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Meadlands Drive
School category	Community		Petersham
Age range of pupils	7 to 19		Richmond TW10 7ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0208 948 0047
Number on roll	42	Fax number	0208 948 0047
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Leonard
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Anne Nanasi

Age group 7 to 19	Inspection dates 7 February 2006 - 7 February 2006	Inspection number 276796
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Smaller than most similar schools, it has Investors in People status and participates in the Healthy Schools Scheme. The pupils come from Richmond and neighbouring boroughs. All pupils have a statement of special education relating to severe, profound and complex learning difficulties with additional medical and behavioural needs, including some on the autistic spectrum. The majority of pupils have White British heritage and a few have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school, inspector, parents and learners agree that Strathmore is a good school that provides good value for money. The headteacher, supported by the senior management team gives excellent leadership to a dedicated staff team. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness. The ethos of the school is extremely positive and enables the pupils and students to achieve well. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Many good opportunities are provided to give all learners practical experiences that assist them in becoming as independent as possible. Teaching is good overall and some lessons are outstanding. There is a strong emphasis on effective communication and the provision of relevant experiences. Classroom assistants make a significant contribution to ensuring that learners' academic and pastoral needs are met. The new cycle of monitoring by subject leaders has not yet been fully implemented. Although staff have a good knowledge of pupils' and students' achievements, including an analysis by gender, they do not measure how well all different groups achieve. The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection, in response to the increasingly diverse and complex needs of the learners. A good range of additional lunch-time activities makes an important contribution to all learners' social, cultural and physical development. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, there are few specialist areas and there is a lack of suitable washrooms for students in sixth form. Significant progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good because the good teaching ensures that the students achieve well. Their personal development is outstanding due to good leadership and management and the attention given to providing the students with an excellent curriculum focused on relevant, vocational experiences within the school and local community. Accreditation is well established and gives good recognition of their wide ranging achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

* Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, teaching and learning, making better use of assessment data to analyse the achievement of all groups of pupils.* Improve the washrooms in the sixth form area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of all key stages, all pupils, irrespective of special educational need achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Their individual progress is measured

accurately and records show that pupils' overall progress is good. Pupils' good achievement is due to effective planning and teaching that includes additional specialist input from therapists. By the time students have left the sixth form all will have achieved accreditation within the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) accreditation scheme. The students successfully complete many programmes of work and improve their competence in literacy and numeracy as well as developing skills to equip them for independent living. The pupils and students also achieve well in relation to suitably challenging targets set in their individual education plans. These plans are reviewed termly and new targets are set in light of progress made. Personal development is a particular strength with all pupils and students achieving very well. Although the school carefully analyses data about the pupils' progress it does not yet use the information to analyse the performance of all different groups of special educational needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All pupils and students enjoy coming to school, a view endorsed by parents. Their attendance is excellent and is only interrupted occasionally for medical reasons. They respond very well to the high expectations held for them. By the time they leave the school, they are very well prepared for everyday life and have contributed to the choice of their next destination as fully as possible. The recently appointed school council enables the 'pupil voice' to be heard. Pupils effectively give their views on matters affecting them. In lessons, they express opinions and preferences by communicating effectively verbally or by using symbols, objects of reference, gesture or by the Picture Exchange Communication System. (PECS) Behaviour is excellent in lessons and during break times when pupils choose their own activities and are encouraged to mix socially. They frequently offer praise and support to their peers. The pupils and students know what is harmful to them, to eat healthily and how to relate to others. Pupils feel secure and safe in the school and enjoy responsibilities, such as helping set out resources and planning school events. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form achieve well on work-experience. The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They respond very well to the wealth of rich experiences the school provides. In assemblies, they celebrate a range of religious festivals which reflect the diverse culture of the school community and beyond. They also consider moral issues within the comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE). By extensive use of the local community, including accessing public transport and local colleges of further education, they develop their abilities to socialise in different settings and know how to relate to others. Their cultural development benefits from participation in creative arts such as music and drama from a wide range of cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is much good teaching and some that is outstanding. High expectations and good planning ensure individual needs are met. Close attention to learners' individual targets in lessons promotes good quality learning. Increasingly, all staff make effective use of PECS and information and communication technology (ICT) to produce relevant work for pupils and students. The recent acquisition of interactive whiteboards has yet to make an impact on learning as all staff do not yet have the necessary expertise to use them effectively. Staff relationships with pupils and students are strong and significantly aided by effective communication and prompt feedback to re-inforce learning. Pupils are frequently praised for 'good listening and good looking' when paying attention to staff. The teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to set interesting work. They also demonstrate a good awareness of appropriate teaching methods to meet the complex needs of pupils, such as those on the autistic spectrum. Expertise is shared effectively within the school, for example, the skilled use of 'sensory stories' taught by a classroom assistant. Visiting specialists including artists and musicians, also make a significant contribution. The close working relationship between teachers and other staff is a key feature of successful learning. Teaching assistants are briefed well. They have appropriate skills to promote good behaviour and ensure that opportunities to learn are maximised. They remain calm yet firm when pupils show challenging behaviour and this approach helps pupils to settle and be ready quickly to return to learning. Other specialist expertise, including that provided by physiotherapists and speech and language therapists is very well integrated into many interesting learning experiences.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good with many strengths, notably the attention given to communication and the meeting of individual needs. The school makes very effective use of national strategies and the extensive skills of staff to plan interesting and exciting tasks for the learners. A strong emphasis is given to first hand experiences that maximise opportunities for learning and the development of independence. The broad curriculum has a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and personal, social, health education and citizenship. Learners with additional complex learning needs access the curriculum through sensory experiences. The excellent curriculum for the sixth form has a most effective vocational focus on independence and life after school. Regular residential experiences within the school bungalow and beyond, including trips to France, enhance the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for pupils in Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form to gain national accreditation in a range of creative and vocational subjects, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The school makes best use of its limited accommodation with few specialist facilities. The on-site

bungalow is an excellent resource for enabling the pupils and students to become more independent. The outdoor play areas, afford a satisfactory range of opportunities for sensory and creative play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, advice and guidance to safeguard learners is good. The school places a very high value on ensuring all learners receive the best possible provision. Individual education, care and behaviour plans are frequently reviewed and used effectively. As a result, learners are assisted in achieving independence with appropriate support. The school makes very good assessments of pupils' and students' achievement. It analyses achievement at individual, end of key stages and whole school levels. Recently, gender analysis showed no significant difference in achievement. Analyses by special education need and mother tongue are not currently undertaken and this prevents the school from knowing with confidence that all groups of pupils are achieving as well as they might. Child protection procedures are well known by all staff who are acutely aware of their importance. Relevant training has focused upon effective care and handling of learners and support staff show high levels of respect for learners' dignity and independence. Frequently corridors are partially obstructed by essential mobility aids and the absence of separate washroom facilities for male and female students are weaknesses. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for and they appreciate the commitment shown by all staff, for example, 'they do an excellent job' and 'we are so pleased we chose this school'. Staff remain vigilant to ensure a safe environment and any incidents are properly recorded and followed up. Links with external agencies, such as careers guidance, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and social services are very well established so that additional and very effective support and guidance is provided as required. Where necessary, bi-lingual interpreters ensure effective communication at annual reviews.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher gives excellent leadership and is very well supported by her senior management team. They have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and future direction. Collectively they have ensured good improvement in the quality of teaching and the curriculum since the last inspection. Leadership and management are good overall. Firmly established performance management for all staff is effective in improving the school's provision. The school has built on the successes noted in the previous inspection report and self critical management clearly shows that the school's capacity for further improvement is good. The school collects a wealth of evidence to support its good self-evaluation. All are committed to improving the quality of teaching, equality of opportunity and curricular access for all learners in response to the changing needs of pupils. Parental views are surveyed on a regular basis and inform the development plan which is a well crafted tool for school improvement. The school has recently introduced a more systemic approach that

provides opportunities for subject leaders to observe practice in their area of responsibility. The impact of these new processes has yet to be realised. Teaching assistants are well deployed and some have additional areas of responsibility and offer good support in sensory education and behaviour management. Governors are effective in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met and are supportive of all proposed developments. They have been active in the negotiations to secure improved school accommodation.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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	
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	
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	
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping me to find my way around your school and for making me so welcome.

I agree with the staff and your parents that Strathmore is a good school. The school is a friendly place to be and I could see that you are happy and enjoy the lessons you have each day. The teachers and all other staff help you to do well in lessons, especially improving reading, writing, mathematics and in letting everyone else know how you feel. You also do very well in becoming more able to look after yourselves. You get on well with the staff and do your very best to see that everyone can get on and learn in class. I could see that you help other children when you can. I was very pleased to see the many different things you do during the day, especially literacy and numeracy and using the computer. I know you also do lots of other exciting things like art, dance, drama, swimming and horse-riding. When you are older you receive awards and this is good to show other people just how much you have achieved.

There are only a few things that I have asked your school to improve. One is to make more use of what they know about how you are doing. Another is for teachers to keep a closer check on how well their subject is being taught throughout the school. I have also asked the governors and headteacher to improve the washroom area for students in the sixth form. These things will help the school to add to all the really good things that happen already.