



Kilgarth School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105130
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277301
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael McDowell CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Cavendish Street
School category	Community special		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Merseyside CH41 8BA
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	0151 652 8071
Number on roll	52	Fax number	0151 653 3427
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Simmons
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Miss J Dawson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	277301

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Kilgarth is a secondary school for boys who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many students have a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Half of the students admitted at age 11 come from a primary special school while others come from mainstream schools or pupil referral units. Attainment on entry is well below average. Because many students have extreme behavioural difficulties and react poorly to formal education, the school offers an alternative curriculum to some older students. It also provides an outreach service to secondary schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school rated its overall effectiveness as good but the inspector grades it as outstanding. The school was also too cautious in judging the quality of its curriculum and the effectiveness of its leadership and management as good. The inspector found these to be outstanding. Parents rate the work of the school highly. Students believe that the school is good and a great help to them. Achievement and progress are good overall but, for younger students, writing skills develop more slowly than other literacy skills. Personal development is outstanding. Attendance is satisfactory; there is a very small minority of poor attenders, which the school tries very hard to engage. Teaching and learning are good and students are given excellent and broad-ranging learning opportunities. Teachers assess their students thoroughly and are developing further means of closely tracking their progress. The curriculum is greatly enhanced in ways that bring interest and enjoyment to learning. The alternative learning programme greatly benefits those in Years 10 and 11 who need this kind of provision. Care, guidance and support are exemplary and founded on a very secure understanding of the needs of students. The needs of the most vulnerable students are very well met. The school has very effective links with other organisations and providers and these promote inclusion and the well-being of students very well. Leadership and management are outstanding; the school keeps itself under review and is rigorous in its self-evaluation. Resources are used most efficiently and effectively and the school has improved greatly since the last inspection and has excellent capacity to improve. It gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the newly introduced electronic system for tracking students' progress so as to gain more knowledge and deeper understanding of their individual rates of learning.
- Seek, in conjunction with the local authority, to increase the availability of expert and focused support to enable the school to address the persistent non-attendance of a very small minority of students.
- Improve standards in writing in Years 7 to 9 by emphasising accurate writing in a broad range of contexts across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Assessment shows that, on entry, attainments are well below average and students' attitudes to learning are poor. However, because of the stable, calm environment and expert teaching provided, students get off to a positive start in Year 7 and continue to make good progress throughout their time at school. Between Year 7 and Year 9, students make gains in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Reading and spelling improve notably. Writing also improves but at a slower rate. Good progress continues in Years 10 and 11. In their final year, all students

complete either GCSE or entry level courses in six subjects, including English, mathematics and science. They do well in relation to their capabilities. In 2005, all students who were not involved in the alternative learning programme gained at least one GCSE grade A* to G, with one student gaining five passes at grade C, including English and science. Students, including those who are most vulnerable, meet the challenging targets that are set for them. There is no significant underachievement between groups of students. There are 16 students in Years 10 and 11 who follow an alternative curriculum and they receive much of their education out of school from providers who specialise in teaching construction skills or leisure pursuits. These students also complete GCSE or entry level courses and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Over their time at the school, most students significantly improve their behaviour and their attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in the classroom and during break times is frequently very good and they are interested in learning. The number of temporary exclusions is declining year on year and where these occur it is chiefly among younger students or those who are new to the school, not among those who are well established. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is seen in the practical care and concern that they show for others. For example, they recently raised a large sum of money to help Romanian children. Students have an understanding of world faiths and they readily accept the beliefs of others. Attendance is satisfactory. Most students are very good attenders but a very small minority have low attendance rates. Boys on the alternative learning programme show their increasing commitment to their own education by improving their attendance. Students willingly express their views about the school. They appreciate their education and enjoy much of it. They are well informed about healthy lifestyles and about keeping safe; their behaviour and food choices reflect this. Students work hard to develop the skills that will promote their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and enables students to learn well and make good progress. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are very well informed about their students and their difficulties and plan effectively to ensure that the needs of each are met. Students are regularly assessed and accurate records are kept. A computer-based system is beginning to be used to keep track of their progress. However, at this early stage, the full value of the information this system will provide is not yet exploited. The consistent monitoring of students' behaviour and attitudes in lessons ensures that each student's personal development is tracked accurately. At the end of each lesson, teachers give each student very clear feedback on what has

been achieved and what should be improved and excellent guidance about their behaviour and attitudes. Teachers are skilful in managing their classes and making learning fun. Students with additional learning difficulties are carefully identified and given the help they need. Teaching assistants work effectively to support more vulnerable students so that they benefit fully from their lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It fully meets external requirements and is exemplary in the way it helps turn around the lives of students; for example, by providing, through an alternative learning programme, for the needs of reluctant students who might otherwise have dropped out of education. All students have the opportunity to work towards a broad range of GCSE and other accredited courses. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to stay healthy and safe, particularly through personal, social and health education and physical education. The curriculum is enhanced by opportunities to attend residential experiences and through planned visits to museums, galleries and places of worship. Through links with other schools, students take part in a wide range of activities including dance, drama and music and the school takes part in the annual, local, multi-cultural festival. All of this contributes to students' sense of achievement and enjoyment. Students are taught about sexual health and the risks associated with alcohol and drug abuse. The students have very good opportunities to learn about and experience the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school is rigorous in its efforts to provide the guidance and support necessary for students to make progress and develop into responsible young citizens. Much hard work and innovative practice is directed at improving the behaviour of students. The consistent and calm approach of the staff helps students, who, on entry, are inclined to behave poorly, take risks and be careless of others, to become much more responsible and considerate. They come to understand how to keep safe and minimise and deal with risks. Relationships between students and staff are exemplary; students feel secure and believe they are valued and that they have a say in matters that are important to them. They are certain that there is an adult to whom they can turn if necessary. Students' academic progress is monitored well and the procedures for monitoring their personal development are exceptionally thorough. By a variety of means, including the alternative learning programme, the school encourages reluctant attenders to come regularly to school. Child protection procedures are in place and thoroughly understood by all staff. Excellent advice is procured for students about their career paths and they are given very good guidance about their choices.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and her deputy work assiduously to develop provision and improve standards. Since the last inspection, the capacity of the school to fully meet the needs of students has been increased significantly. The governors are knowledgeable and supportive, and play their part by monitoring the work of the school and holding leaders to account. The school evaluates its effectiveness accurately and thoroughly, although, in its self-evaluation form, it is reluctant to give itself full credit for success. It uses surveys to capture the views of its students, parents and other stakeholders and analyses the results. Where analysis shows up areas that need attending to, these are prioritised in the school improvement plan. The leadership pays exceptional attention to detail in its plans to address the behavioural difficulties of its students. By anticipation, it is able to avoid the occurrence or escalation of incidents and, as a result, the school is calm and runs smoothly. Because of exceptional leadership that they find supportive and inspiring, staff are confident in their work. Recruiting suitable teachers has posed difficulties because of the high calibre required, but the school is very successful in retaining its workforce, all of whom have, as their first priority, the care and protection of students. Links with external agencies and with other schools and colleges are exceptionally good. This leads to the personal interests of students, including vulnerable and looked-after children, being carefully considered and opportunities for learning being greatly extended. All students are given equal access to the curriculum and opportunities to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. Resources are very well managed and the accommodation has been carefully adapted to fully meet the curriculum requirements of students.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

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 being so helpful during my visit to your school earlier this week. In particular, I would like to thank those members of the school council who were generous enough to take time to talk with me.

You told me that you thought your school was good and, more importantly, that it was good for you and had helped you. Some of you said that you really enjoyed certain lessons and others that the school made it possible for them to follow interests or sports outside of school time. You felt that there was always a teacher or another adult who you could trust and to whom you could turn if necessary. You knew all about healthy living and about the importance of a good diet and lots of exercise. There were, you said, sometimes quarrels among the boys but no bullying. A teacher was always there to help sort matters out. Your ideas are, you believe, listened to by the school and often put into practice.

I found that your school is very helpful to you because:

- it is extremely well led and managed and all the adults who work at the school do their best to keep you safe, guide you and help you with your problems
- teaching is good and helps you to understand and learn
- you are given a wide range of interesting things to do, including many outside of school
- you make good progress and learn to be better behaved.

To help your school become even better I have asked your headteacher, your teachers and your governors to:

- keep an even closer eye on your progress
- try to help you to improve your writing
- provide more professional help to improve attendance.

Thank you again for all your help.