



Heaton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106173
LEA Stockport
Inspection number 277500
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Frances Gander CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	St James Road
School category	Community special		Heaton Moor
Age range of pupils	10 to 19		Stockport, Cheshire SK4 4RE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4321 931
Number on roll	70	Fax number	0161 4326 717
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Bird
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2000	Headteacher	Ms E Seers

Age group 10 to 19	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	Inspection number 277500
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school educates pupils and students who have a severe or profound multiple learning difficulties and disabilities. They live in and around Stockport and come from a range of social and cultural backgrounds. Half of the pupils or students have profound difficulties and need a high level of care. The rest have severe learning difficulties including communication difficulties, challenging behaviour, or autism. The school has a very large Extended Education Department for those over 16 years, which caters for half of the pupils in the school.

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 is effective and offers good value for money. It meets the educational needs of all pupils and students well by providing a wide range of relevant opportunities. Teaching is good and there are many instances when teaching is outstanding. The school provides excellent support, care and guidance. The continual assessment of pupils' and students' achievement in most of the subjects, along with the very well co-ordinated teamwork, ensures that they make good progress. This is less well developed in a few subjects. Another outstanding strength lies in the extensive and purposeful links the school has with a wide variety of support services, as well as local schools. These ensure that all pupils and students are able to engage in educational activities and opportunities outside this school. This has a considerable effect on learning and contributes to their outstanding personal development.

The managers have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and, because of this they are very well prepared when considering any changes to the provision. The main area for improvement is already part of this year's school development plan. Improvement from the last inspection has been extensive, resulting in, for example, new rooms for older students. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to continue improving. The inspection findings agree completely with the school's self evaluation.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the provision in the Extended Education Department is good. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection, especially in the provision of very high quality accommodation. This has allowed the school to meet the education and care needs of the increasing number of students. The school does this well by providing a flexible and individual approach to students' timetables and their curriculum. One parent summed this up very well by saying, 'My son has settled in the Extended Education Department and I feel it is because his individual education plan is really 'tailored' to his needs.' Students are taught well, and sometimes the lessons are outstanding. Lessons are very well organised so that students are always well supported and cared for. They achieve well and are awarded a range of external accreditation. Many have developed the basic skills so that they gain independence, participate in work experience and make considerable gains in their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce a system whereby the performance levels of pupils in non-core subjects can be recorded, and which provides the means for subject co-ordinators to monitor pupils' achievements in their subjects across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Year-on-year pupils and students make measurable gains against the nationally accepted performance levels (P levels), though standards are low, reflecting the acute needs of the pupils. This is especially so in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education, where the school records the levels and is able to track and identify progress. Progress in other subjects is less evident as there is no such system in place.

As they settle into school and learn the routines, pupils continue to develop their communication and their confidence. Some make outstanding progress, academically and in personal development. This can be seen in the way they communicate in lessons and with visitors. For others, who have a great need of nursing care and support just so they are comfortable, progress varies according to their medical conditions. The assessment information of the performance of older students shows that they have made good progress year-on-year. They are gaining recognition for their achievements through the externally accredited youth award scheme. The pupils and students with autism also make good progress. This is because they are included in all lessons and activities, and are encouraged and supported to interact with other people. There is no evidence of underachievement of pupils or students in different groups. The progress pupils and students make against the targets set in their individual education plans is good and is because staff know and understand them very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of the pupils and students is outstanding. Staff successfully support this through the excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and students respond very well to the opportunities to learn about feelings and their own and others' cultures. Assemblies are used well to do this; a memorable example being the singing, aided by signing, of the song 'Shalom'. Excellent relationships exist and help those who have difficulties joining in group-work to overcome them. Pupils and students reliably undertake responsibilities, such as collecting the numbers for lunch, and those who are able are developing skills for managing their own budgets. They make a very positive contribution to the community and are enterprising, for example, raising money for charities and for a school mini bus. The recently formed school council has brought about improvements, such as the development of the sensory garden. Pupils regularly exercise and show growing awareness of the need to eat healthy food.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. All staff manage any unacceptable behaviour, caused by pupils' and students' difficulties, very well so that they do not harm themselves or others. Pupils are aware of how their behaviour may have a consequence on others. Attendance is very good and is higher than average for this type of school. This, along with pupils' and students' very positive attitudes, ensures that they make good progress

in their development into young adults. Parents are unanimous in their view that their children enjoy school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school accurately judges that the quality of its teaching and learning is good. However, many lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding in terms of teacher expertise, access for all pupils, the observable progress made in the lesson, and the obvious enjoyment of pupils. For example, in the excellent music session linked to their English topic of 'Narnia', pupils were introduced to new specially written songs and signs for new words. They showed excellent progress. By the end of the lesson, most knew the words, showed they could sing and sign, and some had the confidence to sing solo in front of their friends and staff.

Teachers' subject knowledge, use of specialised teaching methods and communication, and understanding of individuals' different learning needs and styles, are particular strengths. Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is very good. In many instances it is seamless. Support for pupils in lessons is sometimes shared between assistants and they are consistent in their approach. They provide a calming influence on sometimes potentially disruptive situations. This enables teaching and learning to be uninterrupted. Assessment is good; it is especially strong in the core subjects. However, it is not as strong in foundation subjects where pupils' achievements are not recorded using 'P' levels.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The termly planning completed for each pupil shows a match of activities to individuals' learning needs. It highlights learning objectives, different activities and an evaluation of what each pupil has achieved in each subject over a period of time. However, because this evaluation is not linked to the national 'P' levels in every subject it does not provide a basis on which to track progress over time. Particular strengths of the curriculum lie in the cross-curricular planning, the different teaching methods used and the use of the environment outside school. Puberty and the danger of drugs and smoking are discussed with pupils to enable them to make sensible choices and be prepared well for life after school. All these support pupils' learning, communication, and knowledge and understanding of the world.

The curriculum is supported by an extensive range of out-of-school experiences, including the shared learning experiences that the school has entered into with many other schools and colleges, as well as work experience placements and after-school clubs. This has, for many pupils, widened their knowledge and had a beneficial impact on their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Despite the fact that pupils' progress in some subjects is not formally recorded, the school's provision to ensure their care, guidance, health and well-being is outstanding. Staff are very diligent and procedures to safeguard pupils are extremely rigorous. Pupils and students are safe, secure and well supported by a range of other professionals, such as therapists, medical staff and the Connexions Service. This ensures that pupils have access to learning, are comfortable and are supported through times of stress and change. Personal care of pupils is dignified and respectful. Vigilance and support for those pupils who may on occasions behave unpredictably, enables pupils to calm down and ensures safety for all. Parents are particularly complimentary about the level of care and support afforded to their children, especially those with very complex needs. One parent whose child is about to leave the school after eight years said, '...my daughter's education and well-being at school have never been a problem. I cannot speak too highly of the professionalism and dedication of the staff at Heaton School'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall with some outstanding aspects. The senior managers and governors set very clear targets for improvement, based on an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is not a reactive leadership but one which looks to the future, analysing different situations which might occur and putting together different plans to deal with each eventuality. For example, it is keen to become an extended school and has already identified where further improvements will be needed, such as to the building. This is, therefore, a very proactive school and one that is flexible in its approach to meeting the changing needs of its pupils. This is proving particularly important as the numbers of pupils at each stage of education increase or decrease yearly, especially in the extended education department for older pupils. Changes since the last inspection have had a considerable affect on the quality of the provision and the progress pupils and students make.

The management makes excellent use of all its resources to enable pupils and students to have good quality experiences and high levels of care. It takes into good account the views of parents, pupils and partner schools. It has excellent links with and support from parents and this was evident in the very positive questionnaires returned to the school. Long-term future vision for the school, as well as maintenance and immediate improvements, forms the basis of the school improvement plan. As a result, the improvement to the recording of progress in subjects, along with the co-ordinators' role as managers of their subjects, were already priorities for the school.

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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?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	

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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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 the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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	1	
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	1	
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	insufficient evidence

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

As you know, we recently visited you to find out about your school, what you do and how well your teachers are helping you with your learning. We would like to thank you all for being friendly, polite, well behaved and welcoming.

We agree with your parents that you attend a good school. Here is a list of all the things that we liked about it:

- how well your headteacher and teachers know and care for you
- that you are taught by good teachers, who are able to help you understand through excellent use of signing
- that you take great care and pride in your school
- how much you enjoy the lessons and activities that are planned for you, such as your music, those with other schools and out in the community
- how hard you try to get on well with everyone and do as you are asked.

This is what we have asked your school to do now, to make it even better:

- improve the way the levels you achieve in some subjects are recorded.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at school.