



Hawthorns Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106277
LEA Tameside
Inspection number 277524
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 5 October 2005
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	Corporation Road
School category	Community special		Audenshaw
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Manchester, Lancashire M34 5LZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 3363389
Number on roll	50	Fax number	0161 3379747
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs A Platt
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Thompson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a community special school for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties and / or disabilities. They enter the school with attainments well below average. Rolls have fallen recently and the needs of the pupils have become more complex. A number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, physical disabilities, sensory impairments and emotional and behavioural difficulties now attend. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The school was a Beacon school and has long provided expertise, and support, to other schools within the local authority. The school is due to be relocated, adjacent to a nearby mainstream primary school, in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding special school that provides correspondingly high value for money. The school has a modest view of its effectiveness. It uses its self-evaluation very well to steer improvement. Pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6 is exceptional overall. Individuals, irrespective of their starting point or capability, make outstanding progress in reaching the targets that are set for them and, where comparisons can be made, learners attain higher standards than most other pupils with similar learning disabilities and/or difficulties who are in schools elsewhere. This very high achievement is brought about by overall high quality of teaching and the provision of a broad range of very good learning opportunities. Because the school knows itself very well, it is aware of how the quality of teaching might be still further improved. Pupils' personal development flourishes in the warm, supportive learning environment that the school provides. It is also outstanding. Leadership is of the highest quality and the school is managed very effectively. The excellent use of carefully analysed assessment data gives the headteacher, senior managers and governors a clear idea of the effectiveness of the school and of how it might be still further improved; the school has the capacity to bring about these improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has already identified that in order to build on its strengths and improve the pupils' achievement it should focus on:

- ensuring that starter activities in all lessons have the pace and impact found in the best teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Assessment confirms that the pupils' attainment on entry is very low. However, learners soon begin to make very good progress towards the challenging targets set for them. Rigorous assessment continues at every stage and targets reflect high expectations of learning success. By the end of Year 6, most learners have attainments that can be measured using levels of the National Curriculum. In science, their rate of learning accelerates further and a few attain levels that approach the average for their age.

Assessment data are submitted annually to a collecting centre, for analysis and comparison with data gathered from similar schools. In 2005, performance was well above the average.

Pupils who have more complex needs also make very good progress. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls, or between majority and minority ethnic groups.

When assessment reveals that progress is sticking, thorough analysis is made of the area of difficulty and an individual plan is drawn up. Individual education plans have sharp, relevant targets and workable strategies; these are generally effective in giving pupils' learning the boost that it needs.

The most vulnerable children, including those looked after by the local authority, receive additional oversight and support that is monitored by senior members of staff and this enables them to achieve very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school judges personal development and well-being to be outstanding and the inspector agrees. Children cheerfully tell visitors that theirs is 'the best school in Tameside'. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school both to meet their friends and because of the interesting and exciting things that they are given to do. Attendance is good with no unauthorised absence. The pupils show great trust in their teachers and are ready to talk not only about the good things in their lives, but also matters that trouble and concern them.

They try hard in lessons and behave very well, taking pride in walking sensibly and quietly about the school. They have fun playing in the playground that they helped to design and of which they are rightly proud. Their voice is listened to within the school. Pupils work together for the good of the community. They are very pleased with the ECO-flag they have been awarded for their care for the environment, including recycling.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. There is a strong emphasis on personal development with very good, personal, social, health and emotional education. Pupils are taught very well about avoiding risks and how to ensure their own safety. They are well informed about how they can stay healthy through healthy eating and exercise. They understand and respect differences between people and their beliefs. Skills that contribute to future economic well-being are developed very effectively. The pupils use these in helping to run the healthy tuck shop and the Christmas toy fair.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is of high quality, therefore pupils make continuing gains. The school extensively monitors teaching, finding that most lessons are good and a significant proportion outstanding. The outstanding achievement of pupils confirms that teaching is very effective.

Senior managers help teachers to develop and extend their expertise through training and direct coaching. They are aware of what remains to be done to ensure that all

lessons are as good as the best; for example, in some cases, making the beginning of lessons briefer and sharper. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. What is to be learnt is shared with the class and work is matched to the capabilities of pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Pupils are told how well they have succeeded and what they must do to further improve.

Assessment is exceptionally thorough and outcomes are analysed carefully. Target setting is therefore sharp and individual education plans are used very effectively where needed to boost learning.

There is a high level of awareness of pupils' individual needs and care is taken to ensure that these are fully met. Picture exchange communication system cards are used very effectively to help pupils understand what is required.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school judges its curriculum to be outstanding and the inspector agrees. The curriculum fully meets the needs of the pupils and provides them with interesting learning opportunities. All pupils are fully included in the daily activities of the school. Very good use is made of time to provide experiences that boost the confidence of the children and promote their personal development. These are well thought out to develop pupils' emotional understanding and to promote positive relationships and the sex and drug awareness education that they require.

A strong emphasis is placed on promoting speaking and listening including the social use of language. In whole-school assemblies, for example, familiar stories were brilliantly told by teachers, who acted them out, and comically brought the characters to life with simple props. The children listened with great care, ready to join in on cue, and with great enjoyment. They left assembly with smiles on their faces, with renewed readiness to listen and talk.

Careful adaptations are made to make sure that pupils with more complex learning difficulties and / or disabilities fully benefit. Very good use is made, for example, of alternative methods of communication. Learning opportunities outside of the classroom greatly enhance the curriculum. Many pupils are given the chance to have part of their learning programme in a mainstream school, and this greatly enhances their confidence and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school judges these to be outstanding and the inspector agrees. The way pupils are cared for and supported has a significant positive impact on their achievement. This achievement is monitored very thoroughly. Pupils are carefully guided through their next steps to maintain the momentum of their learning.

Child Protection procedures are well known to all staff. Procedures to help keep pupils and staff from harm are very clear. Pupils know how to stay safe and how to keep healthy by sensible diet and exercise. They have good opportunities for physical exercise during the school day and take these enthusiastically.

The welfare and progress of vulnerable children are given very high priority. Their needs are known very well and the school works very effectively with outside agencies to ensure that they promptly get the support they require.

Pupils are confident that they can speak about any problems or difficulties they experience. They are not fearful of being bullied or treated badly by other pupils and they know that the school will deal fairly with any incidents that might occur.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Since the last inspection, when the school was judged to be very good, the actions of leaders have brought about significant improvement. Leadership and management are outstanding. Their effectiveness is to be seen in the achievement of pupils and in the quality of care, teaching and the curriculum. The headteacher has successfully brought together a very effective team of senior managers who share the common aim of striving to provide only the best for the pupils. Together they have put in place the very robust systems of monitoring and assessment that underpin the school's success.

The governors play a full role in setting the school's direction and in holding it to account. They are involved, as are others, including parents, in evaluating the school's work and in setting targets for improvement. The school's evaluation of itself is predominantly accurate but it underestimates the quality and effectiveness of some key features of its work. This is partly due to modesty and partly because complete data about how well similar pupils are progressing in other schools are not yet available.

The high quality of the leadership and management of the school contributes greatly to the school's capacity to continue to improve.

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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	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	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	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so polite and welcoming when I visited. I very much enjoyed talking with you and seeing your lovely school.

You work very hard in your lessons, are learning a lot and are getting much better in all the things you are asked to do. Your teachers are very good at making your work interesting and at helping you to do your best. I'm sure that you are finding that learning is often fun.

You behave very well and are very sensible in the way in which you walk safely and quietly around the school. You are all making a big effort to get on with one another and to help others when you can. I loved the playground you designed. I know from what you told me that you are very keen to share more of your ideas to improve the school.

Mrs Thompson and all the staff and governors work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and I am sure that it will continue to get better. I have asked them to do something to help with this and it is:

- to make sure that lessons always begin with a very quick reminder of things you have already done so that you really understand them.