



Pictor School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106390
LEA Trafford
Inspection number 277547
Inspection dates 26 April 2006 to 27 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Jeffery Plumb CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Grove Lane
School category	Community special		Timperley
Age range of pupils	2 to 11		Cheshire WA15 6PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 912 3082
Number on roll	100	Fax number	0161 904 7967
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr S Chouksey
Date of previous inspection	28 September 1998	Headteacher	Mrs J Spruce

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pictor School is designated for pupils with mild to moderate learning difficulties arising from physical difficulties, speech and language difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and global developmental delay. The major need being met at the current time is autistic spectrum disorders. The socio-economic background of the pupils is broadly average; 16% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is above the national average, as is the number with English as an additional language. The school has achieved the School Environment certificate and is working towards the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features: a judgement which concurs with the school's self-evaluation. Effective partnership between education and health service providers ensures that all pupils are fully included in a rich educational programme, make good progress and achieve well, particularly in communicating their needs and developing important life skills. Those with challenging behaviours make rapid improvements in how they behave in school and at home. The school is successful in enabling a significant number of pupils to be integrated full time into mainstream schools. The curriculum is good, but modules for older pupils concerning suitable sex and misuse of drugs need further development. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school provides well for pupils in the Foundation Stage, so they make good progress. The system to track small steps of progress in English, mathematics, science and personal development is good, but it has not yet been extended to include other subjects. Pupils enjoy school and have a positive attitude to work. Attendance is good. The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership and management. Governance is satisfactory, but governors are not clear how to fulfil the specific responsibilities they have taken on to support the school. The school provides good value for money. There has been good progress since the previous inspection and the school's capacity for further improvement is good. It is well positioned to support mainstream schools in managing pupils with challenging behaviour and communication difficulties linked to their autism.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan and implement a more detailed programme of sex education and awareness of drug misuse for Key Stage 2 pupils.
- Extend to all subjects the system for tracking the small steps of progress pupils make in English, mathematics, science, and personal development.
- Equip governors to fulfil more effectively their individual roles in supporting the development of the curriculum and key aspects of the school's life.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Measured against pupils' starting points, achievement is good, although most work at levels significantly below those of pupils in mainstream schools. Pupils with complex speech and language difficulties make rapid gains in communicating their needs, using symbols, signing or speaking clearly and with confidence. A parent of a pupil with autism said: 'Out of the blue, my son said he wanted a drink of orange'. She was delighted because she had waited years to hear these words. Progress in reading is good. Some pupils read by eye and finger pointing using symbols, but the highest attainers in Year 6 read and understand text at a level close to that expected for pupils of their age. In writing, the highest attainers in Years 5 and 6 achieve standards close to the national average; they write beautiful poems and super stories. Lower attainers

use computer programs to write in symbols. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in mathematics and science.

A significant number of pupils gain in confidence and achieve well as a result of successful inclusion into mainstream schools; this school is particularly successful in enabling pupils to return full time to mainstream schools. Pupils with the most complex medical needs maintain their skills for as long as possible. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From their first days in the Foundation Stage, pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils said: 'We find learning exciting in literacy and science. We like making pop-up models and pictures of rocket ships.' Behaviour is good. Those pupils with challenging behaviour associated with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities make significant improvements in the way they behave as a result of the high quality support they receive. Attendance is good. Pupils rarely have to be away to attend routine hospital appointments because most medical needs, including dental care, are met on the school site.

Pupils contribute to their annual reviews. There is not yet a school council, although one is to be formed soon. The development of social skills lies at the heart of this school and promotes dignity and independence. Pupils learn to shop for groceries, queue and take their turn in a supermarket, and how to behave in a restaurant. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. The opportunity pupils were given to say 'thank you' for plants from around the world was skilfully planned to raise their awareness of cultural diversity. The school successfully encourages pupils to eat healthy food and take regular exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Foundation Stage, for instance, learning through exciting play activities builds pupils' confidence and improves their communication skills. Artefacts are used well to stimulate visual interest and pupils are encouraged to answer questions using symbols, signing or speech. Teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants and health professionals is often outstanding and contributes to the good progress pupils make.

From time to time, teachers spend too long ensuring that pupils are settled before they start teaching. Occasionally pupils are not challenged sufficiently, because teachers are concerned about upsetting them. When this happens, the pace of learning drops because too much time is spent working within the comfort zone of the pupils, rather than stretching them to reach their full potential.

Teachers know the needs of every pupil and plan individual learning outcomes for them. Progress against their targets is carefully monitored and the information gathered is used well to plan the next stage in learning. Recently, the school has implemented a tracking system to measure the very small steps of progress made in English, mathematics, science and personal development by pupils with complex needs. As a result, teachers plan in a much sharper way to raise the achievement of individual pupils. This system has not yet been extended to other subjects, but it is in the school's improvement plan to do so.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well planned to meet the wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It meets statutory requirements whilst successfully focusing on promoting communication and independence. Individual learning programmes lead to a flexible, tailor-made curriculum enabling every pupil to flourish. The inclusion of Key Stage 2 pupils in the school is a recent development and consequently, the school has not yet fully consulted with their parents/carers about suitable sex education and misuse of drugs awareness modules for them. Weaknesses identified in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) identified at the time of the last inspection have been fully addressed.

Therapy is integral to the curriculum and makes an excellent contribution to the development of pupils' communication, physical and emotional needs. Effective use is made of visits and visitors to the school to enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care is outstanding. Every pupil is valued and treated with the utmost dignity. Parents are thrilled with the support they receive in caring for their pupils. A parent said: 'I have never walked into the school without looking forward to the experience, and never left it without feeling more capable of facing the challenges of my child's special needs'. Skilful behavioural support ensures each pupil is kept free from stressful situations that are likely to trigger anxiety and inhibit learning. Clear restraint protocols ensure that pupils are kept safe from harming themselves. Health professionals and teachers work together effectively to meet the emotional and physical needs of the pupils.

Transition to secondary school is well managed. Robust arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils are in place. Risk assessments are thorough. There are clear protocols for procedures such as lifting pupils. Parents say that their children feel safe at school and that they can approach their teachers with any problems they have.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's clear vision, which focuses on the highest achievement and enjoyment for all pupils, is shared by all staff. The senior leadership team are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work as an effective team. They have created a learning environment where every pupil is valued. Teachers and teaching assistants feel empowered and so encourage and support each other in getting the very best out of pupils who, at times, present very challenging behaviour because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Workforce reform has been successfully implemented; all teachers have quality non-contact time to plan lessons and assess pupils' work.

Robust systems are in place for checking performance and taking action to improve. This is a self-critical school which takes good account of parents' views. Subject leaders are effective in driving forward improvements in the curriculum. The tracking of progress is well managed but, as identified by the school, needs to be developed to include all subjects. The school improvement plan focuses on priorities to raise achievement and is an effective management tool to move the school on, as seen in the good progress made since the previous inspection. Financial planning is good.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher. However, their recently identified individual roles to support curriculum improvement and other aspects of school life are not yet fully developed. They are clear about what their specific roles are but not about how to carry them out.

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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	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	4	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	3	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	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	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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 your lovely welcome to me as a visitor to your school. I greatly enjoyed talking with you, your teachers and teaching assistants.

What I like most about your school

- The good teaching and high quality of care you receive.
- The opportunities you are given to work with pupils in other schools.
- The good progress you make in English, mathematics, science and in your development of important life skills; and in improving your behaviour.
- Your positive attitude to work.
- The school works hard to keep you fit and healthy.
- Your school is well-led and managed.

What I have asked your school to do now

- To measure the small steps of progress you make in all subjects.
- To improve the provision for sex education and to raise older pupils' awareness of the harmful effects of the misuse of drugs.
- Enable governors to help the school even more.

Keep up your enthusiasm for learning and support your teachers in enabling Pictor to become an outstanding school.