



Mossbrook School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107182
LEA Sheffield
Inspection number 277727
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Rosemary Eaton CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bochum Parkway
School category	Community special		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		South Yorkshire S8 8JR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 237 2768
Number on roll	76	Fax number	0114 283 9253
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs E Smith
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Brough

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Mossbrook is a school for pupils aged 4 to 11 with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils' homes are throughout Sheffield. More than an average number are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over one in five are from minority ethnic backgrounds but only a very few are 'looked after'. The school's residential unit provides stays of one night's accommodation for pupils, including some from other Sheffield schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mossbrook is a good school with outstanding features, providing good value for money. The school's judgements about its overall effectiveness and most aspects of its performance were accurate, but its view of pupils' personal development and the quality of the curriculum were too cautious. Pupils achieve well although, owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the levels they attain are significantly lower than those found in mainstream schools. The children in the Foundation Stage are provided for well, with extremely good attention paid to helping them to be as independent as possible. Pupils' outstanding personal development is a feature of the school in general and one to which the residential unit makes an enormous contribution. Pupils behave well and are seldom absent unless they are ill. A strong feature of the outstanding curriculum is the way in which it is continually reviewed, to ensure that every pupil's learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for and they each have equal opportunities to achieve and develop. The quality of teaching is good, but pockets of outstanding teaching have not been extended to every classroom. Pupils are looked after well. Very close links with parents and a range of professionals contribute extremely well to supporting pupils' achievement and personal development. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, with staff and governors sharing her determination to do the very best they can for every pupil. The school's improvement plan identifies a range of developments to further enhance what the school provides. Any actions defined by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) need to be carried out. There has been good improvement since the previous Ofsted inspection and the capacity for further development is also good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The residential unit is a good quality resource. The care and welfare aspect of the school is inspected annually by CSCI. The most recent report is still in draft form. It indicates that in some respects the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools are met. However, others are still being discussed with CSCI, because of the particular context of the school. These relate to, for instance, the provision of off-site leisure activities for pupils and the use of close-circuit televisions in corridors.

The unit aims to complement the school day by offering opportunities for pupils to generalise and develop what they learn in school, most especially in the areas of social and emotional development, independence and self care skills. These aims are met very well. When the time is right, up to eight older pupils at a time have weekly opportunities to spend one night with their friends, within a warm, family atmosphere. They practise communicating, share meals, follow routines, and play together. Parents speak very highly of the provision and the impact it has on their children's personal development. Residential staff attend annual review meetings and some are employed during the school day - for example as teaching assistants. This helps to keep everyone informed about how well pupils' needs are met and the progress they make towards

their individual targets. The care provided is on a par with that during the school day, because of the direct leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff. Such residential provision is not available to most pupils with similar learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and it is highly valued by the school and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the quality of teaching - for example, by sharing the expertise of the most skilled teachers.
- Address any recommendations in the CSCI report when these are agreed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the majority of pupils work at levels well below those expected for their age: their attainment is exceptionally low. However, they make good progress and achieve well. This is seen clearly in the way challenging individual targets are met regularly. Again, the systems used to track the levels at which pupils are working as they move up through the school also indicate good progress.

When they join the school, small numbers are behind with their learning. They thrive within Mossbrook's supportive environment, their learning needs are met, and they often make rapid progress. As a result, a few of the highest attaining pupils are working at National Curriculum Level 4 - the national expectation - in subjects such as mathematics and science, by the time they leave. Although most move on to special secondary schools, they occasionally go on to specialist units in mainstream schools.

Many pupils make especially good progress in learning to communicate - for example, by speaking, signing, or using a picture exchange communication system. This in turn is a significant factor in their overall good achievement, enabling them to play a full part in lessons and learn well.

Children in the Foundation Stage also achieve well. They progress particularly well in the area of personal, social and emotional development. This means that they become confident and independent learners, which pays dividends in other aspects of their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This aspect is outstanding. From their first days in the Reception year, children are encouraged to be as independent as possible - for instance, deciding which activities they will take part in. As they mature, pupils develop important social, self-help, and life skills, all forming a platform for their future lives. They help to establish and keep school and class rules - for example, 'Be a good friend' - take on jobs around school, lend a hand to younger pupils, and support a variety of charities. Attendance and

behaviour are good. Any outbursts are invariably the result of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and they are successfully helped to modify their behaviour. They are mostly very kind to each other and appreciate the efforts made by others. The whole school erupted with joy when a pupil demonstrated during assembly that she had that day learned to put her arms into the sleeves of her jumper.

Visitors - such as an instructor from a sports college - help to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, and they are made aware of dangers posed by, for example, traffic. All aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are given a very prominent place in school life. Pupils' various cultural backgrounds are celebrated through, for instance, assemblies, displays and visits.

The residential unit significantly enhances the personal development of many of the older pupils. Within its family-style environment, they practise important social skills, such as playing together, sharing and taking turns. They meet friends outside the school day, opportunities that are otherwise often hard to come by and which prepare them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make effective use of pupils' individual targets, in order to match work closely to what they have already learned. One parent commented that his child is 'going at a pace that is just right for him'. For instance, during a mathematics lesson, higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 used the interactive whiteboard to throw dice and play a game of 'Beetle'. Others, at an earlier stage of learning, concentrated hard as a balloon was blown up and the air released, on the count of six. Teaching assistants make strong contributions to pupils' learning. For example, they support individual pupils or small groups. In the Foundation Stage class, they take turns to act as observers, recording events such as when children achieve particular landmarks and building up a profile of their learning. Several of the teachers are particularly skilled in certain subjects or working with one age group. However, their considerable talents have not yet been utilised fully across the school to ensure all teachers use their subject skills and knowledge of individual pupils to even better effect.

Information about pupils' learning is built up systematically and used to compare their attainment and progress with those of pupils in similar schools. The resulting data is analysed by a teacher, who identifies trends and any individuals who are doing particularly well or who may need extra help. The headteacher, subject leaders and class teachers make good use of this information when planning the work pupils do or how support is allocated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and is continually being reviewed and developed. Since September, for example, 'Creative Clubs' have been introduced in Years 4 to 6, enabling pupils to work in mixed age groups and tackle a variety of activities, such as manipulating photographs using computers. Such initiatives are followed closely, to discover their impact on achievement and personal development. Changes to the organisation of the Foundation Stage curriculum have helped children to be more independent, and so this approach is to be extended into Years 1 and 2. The school takes pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities fully into account. For example, those with the most significant communication difficulties now have individual sessions to encourage them to interact in a variety of ways.

A very wide range of activities and facilities enrich the curriculum and foster enjoyment and achievement. For example, a newly built 'classroom of the future' overlooks the school's lake and provides a fabulous environment for learning. Visits are regular, varied, and chosen carefully to complement pupils' learning in school. The residential provision makes an exceptional contribution to the curriculum, enabling pupils to be more independent and practise using their communication skills, whilst enjoying themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well. Their safety is given high priority, with well defined procedures to ensure this, and comprehensive arrangements for child protection, during the school day and when pupils stay overnight. Pupils are encouraged to have opinions and given plenty of chances to express themselves. They feel safe in school and know what to do if worried. The headteacher maintains a close overview of the work of the residential unit, so the quality of care is of a similarly high standard. Although not finalised, the CSCI report is likely to suggest areas for development, which the school will need to tackle.

Pupils are supported extremely well by the school's links with a variety of professionals, such as specialist support teachers and therapists. The teamwork with speech and language therapists is one reason why pupils make such good progress in communication. Parents are given strong encouragement to be partners in their children's education - for example, by opportunities to learn signing. Partnerships with other schools enable the highest attaining pupils to work and play alongside others in mainstream, extending their opportunities to achieve and develop socially. All are prepared sensitively for moving to secondary education, supported by the personal qualities they have developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed, although the headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She has the highest aspirations for the school and for every pupil. Her vision and enthusiasm lead the school to seek out initiatives and funding in order to keep it moving forward. As a result, there has been good improvement since the previous Ofsted inspection and the school is well placed to develop further. Staff are helped to develop their leadership roles, encouraged to undertake training, and supported when they identify projects which may enable the school to offer an even better quality of education. However, the strengths of the most skilled teachers have not been shared fully across the school. A range of systems help the headteacher to form a clear picture of the school's performance. Nevertheless, a couple of the judgements made in the self-evaluation, prior to the inspection, were too modest. Steps to improve what is provided - for instance, to enable the Foundation Stage children to play outside in wet weather - are set out in the school's improvement plan. These actions need to be carried out, as do any identified by CSCI. Staff and governors are involved in identifying priorities and evaluating how successful have been the plans for improvement. Consequently, they support fully the drive to create a centre of excellence. Governors bring relevant expertise - for instance, in finance, and are committed to the school and pupils.

The views of parents are sought regularly and are acted on - for example, daily communication has been refined in response to their requests. Pupils are also consulted, through the annual review process, questionnaires, and school council meetings. This is an outward looking school, keen to share expertise with others. In particular, though, it is characterised by an utter determination to break down any barriers that may prevent a pupil from achieving as well as possible.

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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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	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	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?	2	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	2	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	2	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 friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you what is in this letter.

What we liked best about Mossbrook.

- You all try really hard to do as much for yourselves as you can.
- You are very kind to each other and are pleased when other children do well.
- The school council members work hard to help everyone at Mossbrook.
- The teachers make sure you have lots of interesting things to do.
- The 'classroom of the future' is brilliant.
- Mrs Brough and everyone who works in school do their best to make sure you are all happy and learn a lot.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Keep working hard to make Mossbrook even better.