



# Barbara Priestman School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108879  
**LEA** Sunderland  
**Inspection number** 278070  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** John Atkinson

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Meadowside
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Sunderland
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19		Tyne and Wear, SR2 7QN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5536000
<b>Number on roll</b>	89	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5536004
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Valerie Milnes
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Noreen Robinson

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278070
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Barbara Priestman is a small special school near the centre of Sunderland with 89 pupils on roll with 1 pupil from a minority ethnic background. Its pupils come from the whole of the city, with a small number from neighbouring authorities. Pupils have a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with an increasing number having language and communication difficulties or being identified with autism. Between 2002 and 2004, there was a number of acting headteachers until the present headteacher was appointed in September 2004. Currently, there is a process of consultation with the local authority regarding a new school for Barbara Priestman. The uncertain future of the school is having an impact on pupils, parents and staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Barbara Priestman is a good school that is facing an uncertain future. The majority of parents and pupils rightly value the dedication and support of all of the staff. Pupils and students achieve well, based on what they are capable of, and the number of students achieving general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) is good. The good curriculum, including the extra-curricular lunchtime clubs and the range of vocational courses in the sixth form, is taught well. As a result pupils and students are highly motivated to attend school, enjoy school and work hard. The school works well with a wide range of services to ensure that the individual learner's well-being is given close and careful attention. The headteacher provides good leadership and the inspector agrees with most of the school's evaluation including the identification of its strengths and what it needs to do to get better. However, the inspection judges that the school is cautious in its evaluation of pupils' and students' progress and judges it to be good rather than satisfactory. Improvements now need to be focused on using the data on pupils' and students' prior attainment more effectively in planning the right teaching and learning strategies to ensure that challenging targets are met. The staff work very well as a team and there is a genuine desire to develop their own teaching and learning so that the needs of all pupils and students are met. The good opportunities that school provides for professional development, and the staff's very positive response, means that the school has the capacity to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

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not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of ICT in the teaching of all subjects.
- Use the assessment data on pupils' and students' prior achievements when planning lessons and setting challenging targets.
- Provide good written and oral comments on pupils' and students' work telling them what they have to do to achieve their targets.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

It is not appropriate to compare the standards of pupils' and students' work with all schools nationally, but pupils and students do achieve well when compared to what they are capable of accomplishing. Pupils and students make good progress against the targets that are set out in their individual education plans and there is no underachievement with any group. Their progress in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good. Sixth form students are motivated by the opportunities to follow accredited courses and regard them highly in furthering their chances to earn a living for themselves. The staff celebrate the different

achievements of students and have aspirations to raise these even higher. However, teachers have not yet fully developed ways of using the evidence of pupils' prior attainment to set targets in individual subjects and track their progress.

Pupils and students achieve well because of the good teaching from confident staff that have good knowledge of their subjects. Students with communication difficulties achieve well because teachers emphasise the importance of discussion, decision-making and justifying opinions. Where the school has identified areas for improvement in achievement, the actions taken are being increasingly effective in securing sustained progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' and students' personal development and well-being are good. The school is totally committed to treating pupils and students as individuals and the majority of pupils, students and parents agree that this happens. The very good attendance and good behaviour of students reflects their enjoyment of what the school offers. Students have very positive attitudes to the expectations of school and enjoy outstanding relationships with the adults who teach and support them.

Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is particularly evident in the way that pupils and students treat each other and respect each other's skills and talents. Pupils and students are very clear about the correct ways to behave and consistently demonstrate their ability to work collaboratively and learn from each other. Pupils and students feel that their opinions are valued and taken into account. This encourages them to be involved in the activities of the school and increases their confidence and sense of responsibility.

The health and safety of pupils and students are central to the work of the school. Many take up the opportunities to be involved in sporting and recreational activities and recognise the benefits of regular exercise. There is a very inclusive culture in the school and pupils and students are able to contribute to every aspect of school life in a very positive way.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good because teachers are very thorough in their planning, prepare appropriate resources and make it clear at the start of lessons what pupils and students will be learning. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils and students will behave and contribute to lessons. They use skilful questioning techniques and this leads to high levels of concentration and involvement that result in the good development of communication skills amongst pupils and students.

Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic in their teaching and this is shared with the pupils and students who are very keen to participate and learn as much as they can. A significant strength of all teaching is the very effective impact of teaching assistants, specialist teachers and therapists who ensure that all pupils and students are given the right amount of support, encouragement and challenge. The outcome is that pupils and students become increasingly independent in their learning and more confident in their own abilities.

In the very best teaching, clear and challenging targets are set and the learning is enhanced through the application of ICT. As a result the pace is fast, pupils and students know how much progress they have made and what they have to do to improve. The overall quality of teaching would be raised and be more consistent, if work were marked more rigorously, ICT used to present and explain learning and target setting based on what is realistic yet challenging.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum. There is an appropriate concentration on ensuring that pupils and students acquire the basic skills to enable them to learn well across all subjects. The specialist teaching facilities are good and the appointment of specialist teachers in science, music and English has led to improvements. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 prepares them well for the vocational and training opportunities made available in the sixth form. A significant development of the curriculum is its response in meeting the needs of pupils and students with autistic spectrum disorder.

The enrichment of the curriculum is good and good opportunities for sporting, recreational and vocational success are provided. For example, the school received the bronze and silver healthy school award and runs an annual industry week. Pupils and students make residential and local visits to support their learning and personal development and talk enthusiastically of how these experiences have made them more confident and motivated. Sixth form students have many opportunities to take part in enterprise challenges and understand the requirements of being a good employee through the well planned and appropriate work placements.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils and students including the most vulnerable are well cared for. Staff are committed to providing a high level of care and this is evident in the comprehensive risk assessments that are in place for individual students. The effective partnership between external support services and the school is an effective method for supporting pupils and students' individual medical and communication needs. Child protection systems are secure and well understood. Intervention and support in lessons by teaching assistants is a significant strength in ensuring that pupils and students gain independence and make progress in their learning. The guidance for pupils' and

students' academic progress through the use of written feedback is variable and is not sufficiently well linked to the targets that have been set.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The deputy headteacher has given good and appropriate support in enhancing the professional development of staff to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The headteacher's self-evaluation is open, honest and reflective when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It is, therefore, accurate in its analysis of how good the school is and what it needs to do to get better. The recently appointed assessment coordinator is making an effective contribution by ensuring that the school is improving its collection and analysis of data on pupil and student performance. There have been good initiatives to ensure that teachers are consistent in their assessments of pupils' and students' work and the school is well placed to improve further in its tracking of progress and target setting for individuals. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is rigorous and leads to a clear understanding of where teaching is particularly strong and where there are areas for improvement. The governance of the school is effective and ensures that the school is both supported and challenged.

The leadership of the school is successful in building a positive ethos and establishing a unity of purpose amongst the staff team. The recent strategy of seeking parental views following the pupils' and students' annual report is effective. The replies were carefully analysed and individual concerns that were raised have been responded to. The headteacher is good in delegating responsibility to senior staff and this is creating a team of people who are committed and innovative. They are well able to support the whole staff in responding to the emerging challenges that the school is facing and continue with the improvements of recent years.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

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Barbara Priestman School

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5 November 2005

Dear pupils and students

I really enjoyed the two days that I recently spent in your school. Thank you for making me welcome and sharing your opinions about the school. I hope that you all continue to live up to the good reputation that your school has and you should be proud of the school that you go to.

I agree with your views that you go to a good school because of the many strengths it has.

The staff and pupils and students all get on very well together.

Adults expect you to behave well and work hard – and you do because you enjoy school.

The sixth form is very good in preparing you for the challenges when you leave school.

The school works closely with people who can help you to do better, such as teachers of pupils with visual impairments, and speech therapists and physiotherapists.

I had a long chat with the headteacher and other staff and we agreed that you could do even better as a school if:

teachers set targets for you that will help you to improve

your work is marked so that it helps you to know what you have to do to get better

ICT is used more to help you to enjoy and understand what you are learning.

I know how much you enjoy going to school and it is important that you always work as hard as you can so that you can do all those things that you want to.

John Atkinson Lead Inspector

Annex B