



Nancealverne School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112087
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278844
Inspection dates 24 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Madron Road
School category	Community special		Penzance
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Cornwall TR20 8TP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01736 365039
Number on roll	83	Fax number	01736 331941
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Eddie Perry
Date of previous inspection	4 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs F J Cock

Age group 2 to 19	Inspection dates 24 January 2006 - 24 January 2006	Inspection number 278844
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nancealverne is a day special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. Because of these difficulties, all pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that are well below those normally expected for their ages. There is a small pre-school group (Foundation Stage) and pupils can stay right the way through to join a post-16 unit which takes students up to the age of 19. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils vary, although the area where the school is situated is in the lowest 25 per cent of the country. Currently there is only one pupil who is looked after by the local education authority and no pupils for whom English is a second language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Nancealverne is an outstanding school where all pupils, from those children in the Foundation Stage to students in the Post-16 unit, thrive and make exceptionally good progress in their academic and personal development. Parents fully recognise how good the school is and in large numbers responded to inspectors to say so. The comment of one parent epitomises their views. 'My son has been at Nancealverne for four years and they have truly been the best years of his life'.

Through the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, Nancealverne has developed a highly effective team approach to its work. All staff are valued and seen as important, whatever their specific role. Staff are determined to do the very best they can for pupils. This ensures that the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the many extra activities on offer are all of the highest quality. All pupils are included and have equal opportunities to develop. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, whilst at times following individual programmes, have lots of opportunities to develop their social skills through mixing with others. The accommodation, however, does put restrictions on what the school can offer, particularly in relation to pupils taking part in practical activities or for pupils having space to work individually.

Pupils show that they love being in school, are excited by the activities and keen to do well. They enjoy the company of each other and know that because of the high quality of care they are safe.

The school knows it is effective through its own evaluations, although it does not judge itself as highly as inspectors do. This, though, is a reflection of their determination to develop their practices even further. This, and the evidence of their efforts to improve the school previously, shows that the capacity to improve is outstanding. Improvements in the school's effectiveness, since the previous inspection, have been excellent and have ensured that the school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The provision in the Post-16 unit is equally outstanding and has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. This judgement matches the school's view of this provision. Students now make good and often better progress and are developing clear independent learning styles. For example, when they arrive each morning they independently choose their own lunch and record this on a chart. They are very relaxed within their setting, showing excellent relationships towards each other and the staff. Through this and the support given for their future economic well-being, they are well prepared for life after school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to work with the local authority to increase the space available for both teaching and additional activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Irrespective of their specific special educational needs, pupils achieve extremely well. This is evidenced by nationally collated records that show that a large majority of pupils make above-average progress when comparing their achievements with those of pupils in similar schools.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in all aspects of their learning. Pupils throughout the school make particularly good progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and, from the evidence of work on display, pottery. Students within the Post-16 unit increase their levels of independence and gain, along with pupils in Years 10 and 11, an excellent range of external awards in national recognised programmes, such as ASDAN.

School records show that pupils' achievement has improved each year. For example, in 2002, 26 per cent of pupils were judged to be achieving at an above national average rate in literacy, whereas last year this rose to 69 per cent. These results are influenced by the drive throughout the school for pupils to achieve to their maximum potential. This is reflected in the challenging whole-school and individual targets set for pupils' achievements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Overall, pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is at least good in all aspects and exemplary in many elements. Pupils of all ages and special needs very much enjoy being in school and their good attendance records, excellent behaviour and rapt attention to whatever is happening around them provide evidence of this. Pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully to the directions of staff. Those with the most severe profound and multiple learning difficulties show, in their own special ways, how much they enjoy being in the company of staff and their peers. For example, in a design and technology session, they responded eagerly to requests to touch and smell the different items of food passed to them by staff.

Pupils show a very good understanding of the importance of being safe as they move around the school, and of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. One pupil commented, 'You have to eat your vegetables because they are good for you.' The high emphasis on sport ensures that pupils are fit and active.

Their excellent spiritual, cultural, moral and social development is supported through the many opportunities to consider the lifestyles and beliefs of people in other countries and visits out of school to a wide variety of local places.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school; there are many examples of ideas coming from pupils resulting in improvements being made. For example, the school assemblies now take place during the mornings because pupils expressed a view in the school council that they would be more alert and able to contribute at the start of the day rather than when assemblies were previously held later in the day.

Pupils' economic well-being is extremely well supported through the emphasis throughout the school on teaching and learning basic skills and by the 'preparation for life' programmes that older pupils follow.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The overall quality of teaching and learning is exceptionally good. Teachers and teaching assistants are constantly seeking to find ways to challenge pupils to achieve to their full potential. Basic skills, particularly those of literacy and numeracy, are taught very well. Communication skills are also taught well and are being developed even further during the current year by a greater emphasis on the use of picture symbols (PECS) to enable pupils with the most severe learning difficulties to communicate more effectively.

A key strength of teaching is the level of consistency in how teachers plan what will be taught. These plans are based on accurate assessments and records of pupils' achievements. Successes in pupils' learning are then celebrated.

Pupils of all ages have benefited from a priority in last year's school improvement plan to increase pupils' involvement in their learning. For example, in a science lesson, older pupils attempted a whole range of activities where they were appropriately challenged to think through how they could best understand and remember certain information. The use of a mnemonic - 'My BMW is really fast' to help pupils remember mammals, birds, insects, reptiles and fish is proving very effective, especially as pupils have to pretend to be driving a car as they say it!

The Department for Education and Science has produced video of a literacy lesson taught in the school and uses this to demonstrate good practice to teachers nationally. The lessons shown typify the outstanding practices of teachers in the school. Amongst the many qualities being highlighted is the excellent use of a multi-sensory approach to learning (where pupils learn through seeing, hearing and touching) and the highly effective use of ICT.

One less effective element of teaching, however, is that on a few occasions because the activity involves turn-taking, pupils wait for longer than is necessary to make their contribution to the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum and the many additional activities that pupils can take part in is exemplary. Statutory requirements are met with regard to the lessons that take place during the school day. Literacy and numeracy are given a very good emphasis and ICT is used well in the teaching of many subjects. Opportunities for pupils to mix

and relate to pupils in mainstream schools are very well planned and currently 53 per cent of pupils are spending some part of their time in mainstream schools.

Older pupils are extremely well prepared for leaving school through the programmes they follow. Their understanding of the world of work through work experiences, college courses and participation in mini-enterprise schemes, such as a recent car washing service, are ensuring that they have a very good preparation for life after school.

The curriculum is enriched through a variety of clubs that take place at lunchtimes and after school. In providing these and in the teaching of the core curriculum the school makes best use of the space it has available. However, space is very tight and opportunities for practical activities, such as design and technology and art, or for work with individual pupils, are limited by the accommodation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The overall quality of the care, guidance and support given to pupils is outstanding. Health and safety are given a high priority and staff and governors achieve very high standards, given the difficulties they face with the building.

Pupils' personal development is extremely well supported. The high level of commitment of all staff to pupils means that all pupils feel well looked after and safe. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are alert and happy in their responses to staff. The 'buddy scheme' in place is proving to be a particularly good way of ensuring that the most vulnerable have friends.

Pupils' academic progress is well supported by the clear targets set within their individual education plans. These give an appropriate challenge to pupils to work hard and there are good systems in place to monitor pupils' success in achieving them.

Excellent links with other professionals, such as the physiotherapists and the Connexions service, all contribute to the collaborative approach taken to meet the needs of all pupils, a fact fully recognised by parents in their very positive views of the school's effectiveness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management throughout the school, including the contribution of governors, is outstanding. The headteacher provides a vibrant sense of purpose to the whole atmosphere within the school. She leads by example and values the contribution all staff can make to the school's effectiveness. Together with her senior colleagues she has ensured that a 'team approach' to the everyday functioning of the school has been firmly established. The school's motto, known as its statement of ethos, is 'Everyone together helping our school'. This accurately summarises an aspect that is so special about this school.

School self-evaluation is very thorough and effective. Parents and pupils are fully involved and their views listened to carefully. Staff are constantly reviewing what they do and seeking ways in which they can ensure that pupils can achieve as much as possible. Evaluations and analyses of pupils' progress are made and questions such as 'why do we do this?' and 'is it the best thing we can do for our children?' are central to how the school functions.

Governors, for their part, make a significant contribution to shaping the work of the school and monitoring its effectiveness. For example, two governors join the headteacher and school administration officer each month to monitor the management of the school's finances.

The school accepted the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection and since that time school improvement has been outstanding. Leadership and management are well placed to continue to develop the school even further.

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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	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?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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?	1	1
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	1	
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	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

Thank you for making Mrs Morris and myself so welcome in your school. We both enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the many things you do.

We agree with your parents that Nancealverne is a very special school. All the staff work very hard to look after you and make sure you make excellent progress in lessons and can take part in lots of activities. Your headteacher and the governors manage your school very well.

To make your school even better we think it would be really good if you had more space in the school for practical activities or more places where you could be able to go to work on your own.