



Wyvern School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113958
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279283
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 13 October 2005
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	307a Chickerell Road
School category	Community		Weymouth
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Dorset DT4 0QU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01305 783 660
Number on roll	62	Fax number	01305 77 0965
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sue Hoxey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2 to 19	12 October 2005 - 13 October 2005	279283

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Wyvern is an all-age day special school for boys and girls with significant learning difficulties. These include severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Pupils come from Weymouth and the surrounding areas and are provided with transport to and from school. Currently there are 69 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are from White English backgrounds. There are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. A few of the pupils are in care of the local authority. The headteacher left at the end of last term and governors were not able to appoint a permanent replacement. As a result, the assistant headteacher is currently the acting headteacher. The school is due to move to a new building in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wyvern is a good school, where the excellent care it takes of its pupils ensures that their personal development is outstanding. Pupils grow in confidence and become as independent as possible. Parents acknowledge this and are very pleased with what the school does to help their children. During their time in the school, pupils achieve well and make good progress as a result of teaching being good overall. However, pupils' achievements vary depending on the classes they are in. Those in the Early Years class (Foundation Stage) make excellent progress and those pupils in the primary classes and the students in the Post 16 group make good progress. However, pupils in the two classes for secondary pupils only make satisfactory progress. This is because the teaching of these two classes does not give sufficient attention to the different ability levels in each of the groups.

Pupils enjoy being in school and good supervision arrangements ensure that they are safe. These factors clearly contribute to pupils' good attendance rates. The curriculum is good and well supported by extra activities, such as special theme weeks, visits and good links with therapies. Limitations imposed by the difficulties associated with the current building are kept to a minimum; however, older pupils are disadvantaged by not being able to take part in work experiences. Activities like the recent 'health' week and regular physical education lessons contribute to pupils being healthy. All aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and culture development are very well supported, which is an improvement from the previous report.

Senior staff lead and manage the school well, making important decisions to improve the planning of both literacy and numeracy. The school improvement plan, though, does not give sufficient emphasis to developments improving what pupils can achieve. In addition, the previous senior team had not picked up on the weaknesses in teaching and learning in the secondary department and taken necessary action to bring about improvements. Governors are very active and enthusiastic supporters of the school.

Whilst acknowledging the school's strengths, the school has judged its effectiveness to be satisfactory. Inspectors, parents and the local authority disagree and feel its effectiveness is good and that it provides good value for money. The impact of the recent work of the acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher, coupled with the impending move to a new building, indicates that the school's capacity to improve further is good.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- The move to a new building will bring about necessary improvements to the accommodation. In addition the school should:
- Establish better systems to check on and improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Improve pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching in the secondary part of the school.

- Implement plans to offer work experience for older secondary pupils and students in the Post-16 unit.
- Give a greater emphasis to linking the priorities in the School Improvement Plan to pupils making better progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good progress made by pupils applies to all, irrespective of their learning disabilities or if they are in the care of the local authority. This good progress is evident from the school's records of pupils' achievements and their progress reports. It is also the view of parents, who overwhelmingly feel their children do well in the school.

Pupils' progress during each stage of their school career is, though, different. During their time in the pre-school-aged class (Foundation Stage), their achievements are excellent. Records show that they make rapid progress in extending their communication skills and in becoming more independent. In the primary classes, pupils continue to develop their basic skills well, particularly in relation to speaking and listening or in their use of signing or symbols. This rate of progress slows in their secondary school years for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties, where the records of their progress show only limited improvement and, in a few cases, reduced achievements.

Nevertheless, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 11 all pupils complete sufficient modules of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Transition Challenge to achieve certificates and a few higher-ability pupils pass Entry Level certificates in mathematics and science. In the Post-16 group, students achieve well and take the ASDAN Towards Independence Award, a certificate in meal preparation and in the past a few have passed General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Art. ASD pupils show good progress in their individual programmes and very good progress in integrating with others in their groups to take part in class lessons.

The school has set targets for improvement for all pupils this year and collated these to produce whole school targets for English, mathematics and science. These targets are very appropriately linked to the system the school uses to record the small progress steps each child makes but it is too early to assess how challenging these targets are.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and this supports the development of their confidence to try different things very well. Whatever their special needs, they take on responsibilities, for example, in the Early Years group, pupils independently take registration forms to the office (with staff hiding around corners to watch them and ensure they are safe).

Pupils' behaviour is very good, reflected by the fact that there have been no exclusions in the last ten years. Outside the classroom pupils play happily together and show kindness to each other. In lessons their attitudes to work are almost always very positive, although on a few occasions when they are asked to sit in groups for too long they become restless. Their enjoyment in being at school is reflected in attendance rates being consistently above the national average for schools of this type. The newly established school council is helping pupils make a contribution to the school community.

Pupils show a good understanding of benefits of a healthy lifestyle, including where possible physical activities. Primary ASD pupils seen happily stretching and running in a physical education lesson are examples of this. All pupils benefit from the regular availability of fruit and water. Older pupils understand the benefits of eating healthy meals through the ASDAN course they follow.

Both spiritual and cultural developments have improved since the previous inspection. Spiritual aspects are well supported by assemblies and the desire in the school to celebrate success. Cultural development is very strongly supported by events such as an "Indian Week" held earlier this year.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, teaching and learning are good and this is enabling pupils to make good gains in their learning. A key strength is the high quality of teachers' planning of lessons, which in most cases takes careful note of the assessments of pupils' progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together; in most classes teaching assistants, as well as offering high quality care, are able to contribute effectively to pupils' learning. All staff set high expectations for behaviour and encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. This all helps to make learning exciting and classrooms enjoyable places to be.

Teaching of the Foundation Stage group is excellent. Very detailed planning and regular recording of what pupils achieve ensure that pupils progress at a rapid rate. Recording of what pupils achieve is also a positive feature of the teaching of ASD pupils. For these pupils the use of specific teaching strategies alongside well planned opportunities for them to learn together are very effective.

Teaching, however, is not as effective for pupils with severe learning or profound and multiple learning difficulty in the two secondary classes. The wide age range in each group is a disadvantage but teachers do not plan or teach well enough to meet the very different needs of individual pupils. Work does not challenge the more able and too much time is spent sitting together as a group listening to the teachers.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum that pupils follow is well suited to their needs. It covers the full range of Early Years and national curriculum experiences that they are expected to receive. It also has a very good emphasis on those aspects which meet pupils' specific needs, as identified through assessments. Very strong aspects include the programmes developed for literacy (including developing pupils' communication skills) and numeracy. Links with mainstream schools provide a good range of inclusion activities and visits and visitors to school enrich pupils' experiences further.

The school embraces new initiatives very well, for example, in celebrating its commitment to the Healthy Schools award it recently held a very exciting 'health' week, which was full of different activities enjoyed by pupils and designed to show the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Residential visits are also regular events and photographs of pupils taking part show how enjoyable pupils find them.

The curriculum for both the Foundation Stage and Post 16 unit is good, although older pupils are not currently given the opportunity to undertake work experience. Extra-curricular activities, such as visits and residential trips, are enjoyed by pupils and are very important additions to the timetabled lessons. The accommodation limits what can be offered in a few subjects, particularly for elements of design and technology, but this will be resolved when the school moves to its new site.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is exceptional and ensures that they are very safe. Pupils trust the adults in their school and are helped very well to take more and more responsibility for their own learning through the targets for improvement set for them and the emphasis on them making choices and decisions. Child protection procedures are very good. Effective health and safety and risk assessment procedures ensure that pupils' opportunities for independence are maximised within accommodation that at times limits these.

Pupils are listened to through formal means such as involvement in their individual targets and annual reviews, the use of an advocacy service and the school council. The whole ethos of the school is centred on listening, watching and learning with and from the individual; the use of Picture Education Communication Systems, (PECS) sign and other resources enables those with the most difficulties to have their say too.

Staff have a very good understanding of pupils' needs; the way in which teachers, teaching assistants plan and reflect together on children's needs and achievements is very impressive and effective. Very good use is made by the school of the sometimes limited time they have from other agencies such as speech and language therapy and physiotherapy, and all agencies work well together. Particularly good examples of this

are the close links with a respite centre and work on writing skills with the occupational therapist. Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior staff have played a significant part in developing the very positive atmosphere in the school, where the needs of every child are carefully considered. Developments they have led, such as the improved links between assessment and the curriculum and revised whole-school literacy and numeracy programmes have improved the quality of education being provided. Subject leadership has improved since the time of the previous inspection, and a recent opportunity for subject leaders to observe teaching of their subjects has proved useful. However, the current senior team do recognise that there has been insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching in the past and this has meant that weaknesses in the teaching of secondary pupils have not been addressed. Plans have already been made to address this weakness.

Governors are very enthusiastic supporters of the school and through a well structured committee system and allocated areas of responsibility know the school well. They challenge the school well and their decision not to appoint a headteacher indicates their commitment to high quality. They are not, though, sufficiently involved in creating the School Improvement plan. Finances have been managed very well.

Grade: 2

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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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?	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	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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

15 October 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making Mrs Lewis and myself so welcome in your school. We both enjoyed meeting you and hearing about the many things you do. I was especially pleased to meet with those of you on the school council and although I now know many of you like McDonalds, I can also tell how happy you are to be in school.

We have written a report about what we think about your school and sent a copy to the school. They will then be sending a copy to your parents and carers.

The most important things we have to say about your school are:

All the staff care and look after you very well. They make sure you are safe and happy in school

You have good teachers, most of whom make sure the work is right for you

You learn about many exciting things in lessons and on visits

You are all growing up very well, many of you being able to do lots of things without someone having to help you.

To make your school even better we think, and your acting headteacher agrees with us, there are a few things that should happen:

The senior staff should do a little more checking on what is happening in lessons

Many of you in the secondary classes could be given harder work to do and the oldest of you should have the chance to have some work experiences

The school's plans to make the school even better should show how they will help you do even better in your work.

Thank you for being so helpful and kind to us.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett Lead inspector