



Hare Law School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114340
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279367
Inspection dates 12 January 2006 to 13 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Noreen Buckingham

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Catchgate
School category	Community		Annfield Plain
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Stanley, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 234547
Number on roll	93	Fax number	01207 234922
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Alderman Thompson
Date of previous inspection	1 December 1998	Headteacher	Mrs Maggie Collins

Age group 5 to 16	Inspection dates 12 January 2006 - 13 January 2006	Inspection number 279367
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Hare Law school is a day special school in North West Durham for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. An increasing number have additional complex learning needs such as autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils can be admitted between the ages of 5 and 16, but currently few are under 8 years of age. Numbers have decreased in recent years. Pupils' standards on entry are below those expected for their age. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and no pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory with some good features. This finding agrees with the school's own judgement. Parents' views are overwhelmingly positive. Pupils' good personal development and attendance show how much they enjoy school and the good level of care they receive. Other strengths are the headteacher's leadership and management, elements of teaching and learning and the curriculum. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and is improving in English and mathematics. However, while pupils learn certain skills in information and communication technology (ICT), they are not able to develop and apply them through work in other subjects. Subject leaders are not involved enough in monitoring and improving their subjects. Governors fully support the school and are increasingly active in monitoring its work, but they do not assist in the setting of challenging whole-school targets to raise pupils' achievements. The school nevertheless gives satisfactory value for money.

Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory improvement. Its accommodation is improved and it makes better use of assessment information to ensure that lower attaining pupils make more progress in mathematics. Although the involvement of governors and subject leaders remains an issue, other recent management issues have been resolved. The stability and direction provided by the appointment of a permanent headteacher gives the school a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

The school should:

- raise pupils' achievement, particularly by involving all staff and governors in setting and using whole-school targets
- improve pupils' learning in lessons by making subject leaders more effective in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching
- increase pupils' use of ICT in other subjects to raise their confidence and competence in this subject.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are low compared to national expectations. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their individual capabilities, and different groups, such as boys and girls and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, achieve equally well. A few make good progress.

The school adequately identifies individual areas for improvement and enables pupils to meet the targets on their individual education plans (IEP). It also uses assessment information to decide how to reinforce or change its provision for particular pupils. The information is not used, however, to set whole-school targets for raising standards.

Older pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in the range of nationally accredited examinations they are offered, such as General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in art, Entry Level 1 in mathematics, science and physical education, Entry Level 3 in English and ICT, and a wide range of units which include vocational subjects that support their preparation for leaving school. There are some good examples of extended writing in English in Years 8 to 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most show a good level of maturity by the time they reach Year 11 and are prepared for life after school as a result of the school's strong emphasis on personal and social skills. Pupils develop a keen sense of responsibility and pride in themselves and their school. Members of the school council take their role very seriously, feeling that they can make a difference to what happens in their school and the wider community. For example, they have raised funds for Oxfam and created a garden within the school grounds in memory of a former pupil.

Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to lessons. Their good attendance indicates how much they enjoy what the school offers. Losing a football match did nothing to dampen their high spirits, their enthusiasm for participating in the game or their determination to do better next time. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions is high, most relate to a very small minority of pupils. All staff are trained in a team approach to managing behaviour, and this has a positive effect on improving pupils' behaviour.

Because of good opportunities in physical education, science and design and technology, pupils learn well about the importance of healthy lifestyles and about health and safety generally. Pupils are adequately prepared for their future lives by developing understanding of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, which are used well by the older pupils involved in the Young Enterprise project, 'Dazzle Designs'.

The school's ethos supports pupils' social and moral development well but their spiritual and cultural development is just satisfactory. The celebration of individual achievement in assemblies raises pupils' self-awareness and esteem, but they do not learn enough about life in our culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there are some good features, especially in English in Years 8 to 11 because, in these classes, the teacher's secure subject knowledge, enthusiastic approach and very positive relationships strengthen pupils' learning. Additionally, the different approaches used for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder help them to make progress in lessons. In some lessons, too little

is asked of the pupils; activities are routine, and a slow pace further disengages pupils. Planning varies in quality. At best it provides good detail for individual learning needs and targets; at other times it is vague, with minimum information about content and outcomes.

Praise and encouragement are used effectively to maintain interest and enable pupils to see how well they are doing. This was particularly evident in a design and technology lesson in which pupils were completing a money box to a specified design. Pupils were very proud of the finished product and able to assess how well they had met the design criteria. Similarly, in a trampoline lesson, pupils learned new skills well and enjoyed the practical element so much that they participated with enthusiasm. When marking is good, it gives pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their work, but worksheets are generally overused and seldom match individual needs.

Teaching assistants make a vital difference in the classroom because of the way they manage and support pupils and work with teachers. This means that most pupils are engaged for most of the time and disruption to learning is minimal.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and generally meets the needs of all the pupils. The school has recognised the need to adapt it for some pupils, and also to give older pupils work placements and work-related learning activities, and to develop life skills. Pupils have some satisfactory opportunities to work in mainstream schools on an individual basis. Opportunities for pupils to use and improve their computer skills across the curriculum are very limited. However, older pupils have good opportunities to access a number of courses of their choice in local colleges, where they can continue their learning after leaving school.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education has a positive effect on pupils' overall personal development. This is further supported by the programme Towards Responsibility in Education and Employment, in which a weekly theme encourages pupils to improve specific personal attributes. Success in this is celebrated in assemblies.

The curriculum is enriched by a number of activities throughout the year. Examples include local church services, a community orchestra, links with the local People's Kitchen which helps the homeless, local arts groups and visits to places of interest. In addition, all pupils enjoy the opportunity to go on a residential week. 'It's good going away. You get to do good things'. However, pupils have few opportunities for any activities after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school successfully places a strong emphasis on pupils' care, guidance and support. A wide number of agencies support pupils, parents and the school. As a result, the staff know the pupils very well, pupils and staff have very positive relationships, and pupils trust staff to help them if they have a problem. Health personnel give good

support, for example by holding “drop in” sessions, and Connexions staff support careers work.

All statutory requirements are securely met, and careful risk assessments ensure the safety of pupils both in and out of school. All staff are trained in a team approach to managing behaviour. Parents are very confident that the school has their child’s best interests at heart, ‘Choosing Hare Law for my son was the best decision I have made’, said one parent. The school council and their own Annual Review give pupils opportunities to make decisions about what happens in school. However, some reports to parents do not give a full picture of individual progress across the curriculum. The tracking of pupils’ progress is at an early stage, but it does give basic information which helps staff to decide whether to support what is being done or to consider changes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has come through a difficult time and the appointment of the acting headteacher to a permanent position has brought stability to leadership and management. She has the drive, vision and determination to move the school forward, and a commitment to provide the very best for every pupil. The school’s self-evaluation shows that she knows the school well and her judgement that leadership and management are satisfactory agrees with the inspection judgement. She has prioritised the most important areas for improvement and enlisted the views of parents and pupils. Parents have full confidence in the leadership and management of the school.

Despite some strengths in the middle management, the need remains to extend the role of subject leaders in monitoring and improving teaching in their subjects so that learning becomes good rather than adequate. Governors fully support all the school does but are becoming more critically involved and challenging, as was seen when a governor challenged the number of exclusions and wanted to know more about the reasons for them. However, governors do not yet use the school’s assessment information to set the school challenging targets in order to help to raise pupils’ achievements.

The headteacher has introduced new ways of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and has recognised the need to involve others in the process. The school improvement plan highlights the most important areas for development well. Considering the school’s past problems and its record of improvement, its current capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	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	2	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?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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	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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12 Jan 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school last week. I did enjoy meeting you all and talking with you. You gave me valuable insights into how your school is run and how well you are cared for. The things I particularly noted were:

the way you behave well and enjoy your lessons. Your attendance is good so I know you enjoy coming to school

the way all the adults in the school take care of you all equally and make your school a happy place to be

how you make good relationships with each other and all the adults in school

how very happy your parents are with what the school does for you

the range of opportunities you are given as you get older to get ready for the next step in your lives

how the headteacher and staff make decisions with your best interests at heart.

I have asked your headteacher and governors to make your school even better by:

encouraging all the teachers and governors to be more involved in all aspects of what goes on in the school

giving you more opportunities to use your computer skills in lessons

getting teachers to take a closer look at how subjects are being taught so that they can be improved.

With very best wishes

Noreen Buckingham

Lead inspector