



The Shrubberies School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115823
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279684
Inspection dates 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005
Reporting inspector Sarah Mascall RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Oldends Lane
School category	Community special		Stonehouse
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Gloucestershire GL10 2DG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01453 822 155
Number on roll	80	Fax number	01453 822 155
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Jackson
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Jones

Age group 2 to 19	Inspection dates 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	Inspection number 279684
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The Shrubberies is a special school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and there are a number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils are aged between 2 and 19. There are 85 on roll at present. Pupils are taxied in from the local area and come from a wide social background. Nearly all pupils are White British and there are no pupils with English as an additional language.

The majority of pupils leave school in Year 11. The Post 16 Unit takes students from all over the county who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many of these students display very challenging behaviours.

The headteacher has been in post just over a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Shrubberies is a good school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and how much it has done for their children. The leadership team are new and have done much to develop the school over the last year. They work well together and provide good leadership and management. Teaching is good and as a result pupils achieve well over time. Children in the early years classes are given a very good start to their education and by the time they reach the primary classes have developed a good range of skills. All pupils make good progress in developing their communication skills but pupils have insufficient opportunities to use computers and develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' personal development is good. They develop into confident individuals who are keen to share their ideas. Through the school council they show good awareness of the importance of living healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is good and provides pupils with an effective range of experiences. However, the range of different activities that support pupils' understanding of the world of work needs to be better organised. The care and welfare of pupils is given a high priority and effective support systems are in place. The quality of pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) though, is inconsistent and as a result they do not always show the progress pupils are making. The school has done much to make up for the inadequacies in its accommodation. Even so, the buildings in which pupils in Years 7 to 11 are based are of poor quality. Governors are very supportive of the school and are developing their roles in checking what the school does. The school has addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous report appropriately and has a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' opportunities to use computers and develop their ICT skills.
- Ensure that IEPs are more consistent and effective at showing pupils' progress.
- Continue with the present work to develop a more organised system for enabling pupils to have a wide range of opportunities for work related learning.
- Improve accommodation for pupils of secondary age.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils, regardless of their special needs, achieve well and make good progress in most subjects. However, all pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in developing their ICT skills. By the time they leave school in Year 11 pupils have gained passes in National Skills Profile (NSP) and Advanced Lifelong Learning (ALL) courses. There is a very good focus on developing pupils' reading skills in the early years and primary classes and as a result pupils make very good progress. Pupils make good progress in learning

to communicate because signing and a range of communication strategies are used well throughout the school. Many become confident speakers, keen to express their ideas and explain their work to visitors. Early years children learn a good range of skills and are prepared well for starting in the primary classes. Post 16 pupils are well prepared for life when they leave school, having developed an understanding of basic skills that support them towards becoming independent. The school uses the data it has on pupils' progress well to set realistic whole school targets for pupils' achievements and makes good progress in reaching these.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are extremely positive about their school and feel they have learnt a lot. This is a similar view to that of parents. Pupils' keenness to be in school is reflected by their good attendance. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Many are learning to manage their behaviours and sit and listen for long periods of time.

The school council is an effective group who are eager to carry out their roles sensibly. They have been very effective in improving aspects of the school, for example, school dinners and encouraging the school to be involved in recycling. Pupils are aware of the need for healthy living and make the most of opportunities to keep fit and stay healthy. Initiatives such as a competition for healthy lunch boxes has captured pupils' imaginations and they are very aware of foods that are good for them. The school council has plans to spend some of its budget on sports equipment and starting a vegetable garden. Older pupils are responsible for making sure all classes have fresh fruit each day and pupils have access to drinking water at all times.

Assemblies and circle time enable pupils to appreciate the world around them and celebrate their successes. Pupils are very supportive of each other and those who are less well off than themselves. They do a lot to raise money for charity and have a good awareness of life in other countries and cultures. There are appropriate plans to extend their involvement in the community through opening up their café to local pensioners. Mini-enterprises in the secondary school have raised pupils' awareness of managing a budget and marketing their products, such as the Christmas cards they have produced.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have become very skilled in dealing with the wide range of learning disabilities of the pupils they teach. A strength of their practice is the range of skills they have to assist pupils to communicate. Teachers are confident signers and many make good use of symbols to enable pupils to make choices. The very good atmosphere and humour around the school give pupils confidence and a sense of well-being. One pupil commented that the school 'has done a lot for my self-esteem'. Much of this is down to the way teachers and teaching assistants praise and encourage pupils in lessons.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well; the consistent approach taken by all staff enables pupils to understand what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. As one pupil said, and the others with him agreed, 'Teachers are fair but firm!' The school has recently upgraded its ICT equipment but not all staff are confident in its use. As a result pupils are not being given the opportunities they should to use computers and develop their ICT skills.

There is a satisfactory range of systems in place to check how well pupils are learning. Examples of very good practice include the regular recording of the achievements of early years pupils in lessons. However, teachers do not always ensure that work is matched to pupils' abilities and on occasions all pupils are expected to do the same work despite the wide range of abilities in each class. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory. Work is marked regularly and praise given for good work, however, not all teachers outline clearly how much help is given to the pupils in order to enable them to achieve the task set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Much work has been done to improve the curriculum and ensure that pupils are getting a wide range of experiences. For example, the school identified that the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) was not effective and introduced "life track" sessions. As a result PSHE and citizenship are now well planned and ensure that pupils have age-appropriate lessons in topics such as sex education and keeping safe. Work related learning is also included in these sessions. Although the provision for this is satisfactory overall, the co-ordinator has recognised the need to pull together all the different experiences pupils are given throughout the curriculum to ensure they have the chance to develop a wide range of work related skills. There are appropriate plans to introduce a further life skills programme (ASDAN), which will support pupils' learning further. Recent changes in what is available for Post 16 pupils has ensured that there is a more structured approach to learning and this is having a positive impact on preparing students for life when they leave school. Good use is made of the community, with pupils visiting local facilities and pupils benefit from links with mainstream and other special schools. Good use has also been made of local schools to support the curriculum especially for design and technology and physical education because the school's facilities in these subjects are not adequate to meet the needs of secondary aged pupils.

There are a good range of extra activities that support the curriculum and which are much appreciated by pupils. They talk enthusiastically about the visit to Holland and curriculum visits to historic monuments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are good systems in place to support pupils' care and welfare and these are enhanced by good training opportunities for all staff. Child protection procedures are good and there is careful recording of any incidents. Health and safety is carefully

monitored and procedures are constantly being further developed to meet the range of pupils' needs as they become more challenging. There is a good range of facilities to enhance pupils' well-being; the use of a music therapist is an example of this. Effective use is made of outside agencies, including speech and language therapists and the Connexions service to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Good support is also provided to parents to enable them to help their children.

A lot of work has been done on improving assessment procedures and the school is continually reviewing its procedures. These are currently satisfactory overall and the school has recognised the need to check more closely the targets being set in pupils' individual education plans to ensure they are appropriate and are evaluated carefully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and her newly formed senior management team have achieved a lot in a short space of time. Much of this success is a result of the headteacher's approach in empowering staff to take on responsibilities and initiatives. The school has gained many awards in the last year, which recognise the quality of the work that is being done. There are very good opportunities for staff to develop their skills and this is reflected in the good knowledge and understanding staff have of pupils' special needs.

The school has a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and close attention has been given to ensuring that systems are effective. The considerable amount of data gathered on pupils' achievements is analysed well to look at areas that need improving and the school has appropriate plans to extend this further to analyse the progress of different age groups and by gender.

The governing body carries out its role satisfactorily. It has been through a period of change and has rightly recognised the need to check on the work of the school more thoroughly. The finances of the school are managed well and as a result resources are good. The school and governors are very good at raising funds and much work has gone into improving classrooms and the site. However, the secondary classrooms are based in temporary classrooms, which are in poor condition and are separate from the main building.

This is a school that is improving at a rapid rate. Staff are committed to the pupils and work extremely hard. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has the capacity to improve even further.

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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	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	2	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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

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

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	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	3	
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

The Shrubberies Oldends Lane Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2DG

11 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I very much enjoyed meeting and talking to you. I was very impressed by how many of you take an interest in staying healthy and the very good work of the school council.

Your school is a good school and it was so nice to see how much you all liked going there. These are some of the things I liked best:

Your teachers are good at signing and communicating with you and because of this you do well in learning to communicate with people.

You have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe.

Your headteacher and her staff work very hard to make sure you learn as much as possible when you are in school.

All your staff have kept up with their training to make sure they can help you do well.

There is a very happy atmosphere in your school and you said you feel safe and confident in school.

To make things even better I have suggested four things that the school should now do:

You need to have more opportunities to use computers in your lessons.

The school gives you opportunities to learn about going to work but it has to make sure that these are better organised.

Although some of you have very good targets in your individual education plans a few are not as good and the school needs to make sure that they are all good.

The classrooms for pupils who are aged between 11 and 16 are not very good at all. They are separate from the rest of the school and need to be replaced with proper classrooms.

Thank you again for all your help. I wish you well for the future.

Sarah Sarah Mascall (Lead inspector/HMI)