



Five Acre Wood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119055
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280450
Inspection dates 25 April 2006 to 25 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Evans AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Boughton Lane
School category	Community		Maidstone
Age range of pupils	4 to 19		Kent ME15 9QL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01622 743925
Number on roll	90	Fax number	01622 744828
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Freddie Brockwell
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Ms Jill Kratochvil

Age group 4 to 19	Inspection dates 25 April 2006 - 25 April 2006	Inspection number 280450
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Five Acre Wood School is a special school for pupils who have severe, profound or complex learning difficulties. The pupils are taught in mainly age-defined classes. About a third of the pupils have profound special educational, physical and health needs, and about a quarter are on the autistic spectrum. All have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Since the previous inspection, the school has opened two inclusion bases in local primary and secondary schools. It is subject to local authority development plans that will see an increase in the number of pupils on roll to over 200.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Five Acre Wood School is a good school with many outstanding features. The effectiveness of the post 16 department is particularly evident, because although so many of the students only join the school at year 12, they still make excellent progress. All pupils are very happy to be at school; their parents very much appreciate the high quality of education and care provided. The excellent teamwork between the teaching and non-teaching staff is at the centre of the success of the school. Teachers and assistants know their pupils very well and provide work that is carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. Analysis of information on pupils' achievements by individual and by group is becoming an important part of the teaching and management process, although the types of groups covered in the process could be extended, for example to consider gender.

Pupils achieve well in the context of their learning difficulties and disabilities; they make at least good progress in their learning in all age groups. In the Foundation Stage, children make outstanding progress in their social and personal development. In post 16, the rapid manner in which they settle and learn is excellent. Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school and there is often a real sense of fun. Teaching is of good quality, with many excellent lessons. The curriculum provided by the school is good, though the range of activities outside the taught curriculum is limited. Children, pupils and students are very well cared for: this is a key strength of the school. Pupils learn how to live healthy lives both through eating good diets and by taking exercise, though more could be done to challenge pupils with good physical skills. Pupils feel safe and enjoy being at school. Links with families are very strong and parents are unanimously positive about the school.

Leadership and management are very successful, supporting and extending pupils' skills and knowledge appropriately. The school's evaluation of its overall effectiveness entirely matches that of the inspectors. Governors know the school well and provide a good level of challenge and support. The school's finances are well managed and it provides good value for money. The last inspection judged that there was only one major issue, and the school has successfully dealt with that, as well as making many other improvements. The capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- explore means of offering more extra-curricular activities, including sports for the higher-attaining pupils and students
- extend further the analysis of data on pupils' achievements to include groups such as girls, and those with similar physical or medical needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in all sections of the school. Because of their difficulties and disabilities, standards are far below average but the progress made during their time at the school is at least good. Some excellent progress was seen throughout the school, where children, pupils and students benefited from high quality teaching and support that enabled them to take a particularly full and active part in their own learning. Achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is particularly good. In the Foundation Stage, records show that children are making good gains in learning in all aspects of their work. At post 16, students achieve well on their accredited courses and all leave school with at least one accredited qualification. Data shows that pupils in Years 1 to 11 have made good progress towards their challenging targets over the last three years. Improving data analysis has helped staff to monitor individual pupils' progress as they move through the classes. It has also helped staff to identify areas for development in aspects of mathematics and information and communication technology, to raise standards further. Achievement in physical activities is inhibited by the lack of school sports clubs, and active games at play and lunch times.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Their spiritual and cultural development is good and their moral and social development outstanding. Parents report that their children are very happy at school, and this was confirmed by the School Council. Their behaviour around the school is excellent, and attendance is consistently very high. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive.

It is also clear that the pupils feel very safe and secure at school. They respond very well to learning about safe practices and healthy lifestyles, although of course, for many this is predominantly in the hands of the adults. When pupils are anxious or upset, they quickly calm down again and have an obvious and deeply felt trust in staff. As they mature, pupils increasingly make their views known, make choices and assert their independence, whenever practicable. The pupils develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and all are encouraged to participate in the community decision-making process through the school council. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme, which includes independence training, is popular and taken very seriously by staff and pupils alike.

The pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example through work experience in playgroups, homes for the elderly and in charity shops. The post 16 students won an award recently for community service. Pupils engage well in activities with local schools and are committed to work with mainstream pupils and staff. They also take on responsibilities within the school community, such as taking the register and collecting dinner numbers. Older pupils frequently request work experience which involves supporting others. Work-related learning is introduced in the primary part of

the school, and pupils benefit from this extended exposure. It leads to a more highly focused emphasis in careers education and work experience placements for post-16 students. The school liaises closely with provision that post 19 students are moving on to, in order to identify skills that are needed prior to leaving school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good; they are frequently excellent. Lessons are very carefully planned and focus clearly on what the pupils need to do next to make progress. In the Foundation Stage, children learn happily and enthusiastically, and this is continued well in the main part of the school. By the time pupils become students in the post 16 department, teaching style has changed appropriately to recognise the maturity of the young people. Teachers know their pupils well. Assessment of what the pupils know leads to the planning of activities that are well matched to individuals' needs. Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the pupils' learning and care at all levels of the school. There are strong and trusting relationships built on mutual respect, which support learning well. There is often a real joy evident in lessons, for example in an English lesson that involved acting out the key section of "The Tempest". Occasionally teachers do not vary the pace of their teaching sufficiently, which results in missed opportunities to engage pupils further.

Assessment of what the children, pupils and students have learned is accurate and useful in helping teachers plan for the wide range of abilities in many classes. Tracking of the individual progress being made is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum that meets the wide ranging needs of all its pupils well. It is flexible and creative, ensuring that a good broad and balanced range of activities is available to all. The curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' achievements, and on their enjoyment in learning. A particular strength is the provision for work-related learning, which is a key feature of the provision in all classes. For example, regular class sales are undertaken, in which pupils in the class make and sell different items to others, and to their parents and adults. This results in very good economic awareness, preparing them very well for life after school. This aspect is broadened in the post-16 class through the good vocational experiences offered. All pupils in this class have opportunities to undertake work experiences in school, and in the local community where some good business links have been established.

Enrichment of the curriculum is good, with some excellent opportunities for residential trips to France by older pupils. There are currently no extra-curricular clubs for any of the pupils and this impacts on provision for sport, as well as on achievement in physical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered to all pupils are excellent, a real strength of the school. All staff contribute to the friendly, safe and caring environment that ensures the pupils feel secure and happy. Parents are uniformly positive about this aspect of school life: one suggested the school looks after the parents, too. Academic progress is monitored carefully and parents are always encouraged to be involved fully in the planning for learning that the school undertakes. Child protection procedures are appropriate and staff training updated suitably. All pupils receive good support to help them gain access to the curriculum and also to the social opportunities that the school provides. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are excellent. Health and safety requirements are carefully monitored and risk assessments carried out regularly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and, in many respects, excellent. The headteacher has a clear vision and is a very high quality leader. Very ably supported by the deputy head, she has created a committed management team who are loyal to the school and to the pupils. Parents are unanimously positive of the leadership of the school. Parents are unanimously positive of the leadership of the school. The governors discharge their responsibilities with great commitment and care, and offer the senior managers of the school both strong support and positively couched challenge as appropriate. Financial resources are well managed, and the current underspend is an appropriate part of the long-term development plans of the school.

The quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation are excellent. The headteacher and governors know the school extremely well and other managers are fast developing their audit and self-evaluation skills further. Patterns in achievement are analysed effectively but the range of groups targeted could now be further extended in order to refine school improvement planning. There is a clear direction in which the school is developing, as the plans to expand become clearer. Subject leaders are making good links between their development planning and how these plans will improve the achievement of the pupils. The school improvement plan is a very detailed document that underpins the operation and development of the school. As the school has already identified, the plan is not easy to access because it is so all-encompassing, and a more strategically focused version of the plan is being developed. Progress made since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement are excellent.

Teachers and other staff with management responsibilities direct improvements well and monitor the performance of pupils and staff accurately. The emphasis is on seeking ways to improve current practice within a supportive culture, and many staff are seeking further qualifications to enhance their work. Equality of opportunity is promoted well so that all learners achieve as well as they can. The level of resourcing is good and the school provides good value for money.

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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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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?	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
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	1	

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?	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?	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	1	
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	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

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

26 April 2006

To all the children and young people at Five Acre Wood School

Thank you for helping Denise and I when we visited recently. We really enjoyed our day at your school.

We found that the school provides a good education for you and has lots of excellent features. You are happy at school, the grown-ups there work very hard to support you, and you all make at least good progress in your learning.

We also think that Jill runs the school very well indeed.

Even so, there were two things we thought could be done even better. The first is to run more activities and clubs, especially for those of you who like sports. The second is look even harder at the results of the work you all do.

Thank you again for your help.

Very best wishes,

Mark Evans Lead inspector