



Bleasdale House Community Special School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119861
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280676
Inspection dates 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special	School address	27 Emesgate Lane
School category	Community		Silverdale
Age range of pupils	3 to 19		Carnforth, Lancashire
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 701217
Number on roll	24	Fax number	01524 702044
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Alan Greenwell
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Robert Wright

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 19	26 January 2006 - 27 January 2006	280676

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school for boys and girls with profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. Pupils are working at the very earliest levels of development. They are all wheelchair users and require total physical care for all their personal needs. No pupil has standardised speech or means of communication, such as signs or symbols. Ages range from 3 to 19. There are 24 pupils on roll. Most pupils require 24-hour care; 16 of them board, two of them part-time. Family backgrounds are representative of the average population of Lancashire. Many pupils are looked after, to varying degrees, by the local authority. There are plans for increasing numbers as the school takes on the role of a regional, rather than a county, centre of expertise.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school says it's good and inspectors agree. Parents are hugely supportive of the school and are very grateful for the work it does in giving their children a good standard of education and caring for them in an outstanding way. Effective leadership and management ensure that the school gives good value for money. Improvements are always being made, taking good account of recommendations made by previous inspections including Ofsted and social services. With surplus funds, and a high degree of expertise in all areas, the school is well placed to continue improving. Surplus funds are earmarked to meet the cost of improving facilities to meet the changing needs and numbers of pupils. A strong drive to include pupils in mainstream school settings has been particularly effective in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Ways of extending this to other pupils are being explored. Teaching is good, often better, but occasionally safe rather than adventurous. The curriculum is outstanding, especially in the way the residential curriculum so strongly complements the educational one. The care, support and guidance extended to pupils are exceptional. No stone is left unturned to ensure the school is a safe and happy environment in which pupils thrive. The four pupils in the Foundation Stage are well set to embark on life's journey. They are well taught and make good progress from the day they arrive.

not applicable

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Six pupils are over the age of 16. The school feels these pupils are achieving as well as they can and inspectors agree. Learning experiences, especially those relating to the work-based curriculum, are imaginatively adapted to reflect their age, whilst bearing in mind that they remain as totally dependent on others as when they arrived.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Boarding provision is outstanding. It makes a huge contribution to pupils' progress and personal development. Great care has been taken to ensure that the residence provides a very different environment to the school, yet links activities very closely with what has been going on in classrooms to extend and build on learning experiences. A year ago, the residence exceeded almost a third of relevant National Minimum Standards. In the view of the school, the two it did not meet have now been fully addressed. The next inspection is imminent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make teaching more lively and learning more adventurous.
- Make sure all pupils meet pupils from ordinary schools, thus extending opportunities for learning and personal development.

- Manage the surplus in the budget so that current pupils always benefit from the funding that has been apportioned to them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. The school and parents also judge this to be the case. It is very rare for any pupils to progress beyond the very earliest levels of attainment. These are measured by P Levels. Attainment varies between level P1 and P3. Broadly speaking, P1 is the level at which pupils can be seen to be responding to stimuli. For many pupils, progress is evident in the reduction of physical prompts. Most pupils start by needing an adult to hold their hand to guide it to make a gesture of choice or acknowledgement. Good progress is seen when the gesture is still made as the adult hand moves first to the elbow and eventually the shoulder. This often takes years rather than weeks. By the age of 19, targets reflect such things as being able to grasp an object or turn the head to look at an object. Skilled teaching enables many pupils to gain greater independence by learning how to communicate by pressing switches with any part of their body over which they have control. In this way, pupils make choices between two options, for instance which drink they would like at break. They can also signal if they are in discomfort or enjoying themselves. Individual targets are very precise. They are realistic and challenging. Virtually every response a pupil makes is recorded and reviewed so that no signs of progress are missed. There is no difference in the progression of any group of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their enjoyment of activities is evident in occasional, spontaneous shrieks, the lighting up of their eyes and occasional spontaneous movements. Parents say their children are happy and enjoy themselves at school. Issues over racism or bullying do not arise. It is difficult for pupils to misbehave but staff quickly recognise when pupils are trying to be mischievous or uncooperative. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Vivid displays celebrate other cultures. During the inspection there was clear involvement and enjoyment in activities celebrating the Chinese New Year. Social awareness is raised through excellent links with the village community, including the local primary school where many younger pupils enjoy mixing with other children of their age. Sensory rooms provide stimulus, relaxation and serenity. Pupils attend whenever they can. Low attendance is the result of frequent, often extended, periods of absence for medical reasons. Healthy lifestyles are promoted, for instance through swimming sessions, mobility programmes and support from a dietician. Increasing awareness of safety can be seen in activities where pupils are able to sit safely in wheelchairs without the need for physical supports eg harnesses. There are many opportunities for older pupils to experience variation in the working lives of adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, and parents recognise that their children are well taught. There are usually as many adults as there are pupils in each class. Teachers are exceptionally good at ensuring that staff work as a highly efficient team, sharing responsibility for teaching, planning, care and recording responses of pupils. Planning is outstanding, with programmes precisely linked to targets in individual education plans. Every response, however small, is carefully recorded to contribute to the assessment of progress. Monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and observation during the inspection supports the view that although tasks are well matched to pupils' needs there are occasions when teachers opt for conventional, rather than innovative methods. Pupils are provided with a good range of sensory experiences but the atmosphere of classrooms is more often calm and studied rather than vibrant. This is in contrast to the residence, where learning continues, but in a more lively and adventurous fashion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is planned with tremendous awareness of how every activity, whether in the classroom, the residence or away from school contributes to pupils' progress. Teachers and residential staff work very closely to develop each subject area, identifying the contribution they can make and ensuring that learning and development continues around the clock. The Chinese New Year was celebrated with party games and a take-away meal in the residence and this blended well with artwork done in school earlier that day. Subject leaders are playing a hugely important role in school improvement by producing detailed development plans for their areas of responsibility. Tremendous care is taken to make the curriculum relevant. The National Curriculum is splendidly adapted to ensure that experiences reflect a wide range of learning experiences. In the Foundation Stage the curriculum clearly reflects the way that the youngest children learn and, alongside Key Stage 1, includes great opportunities, especially in music, to share experiences with children from the local primary school. At Post 16 and Key Stage 4, pupils experience the wide range of work situations within the school joining in, for instance at Key Stage 4, with the site supervisor in clearing leaves from the car park. A huge range of visits and visitors greatly enhance the curriculum whilst also forging valuable links with the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils are totally dependent on the adults around them and they are not let down. With intensive support, everything that a pupil does, or tries to do, is recorded and put to use in advancing progress. Pupils cannot express their views but trusted people represent and speak for them. Child

protection procedures are rigidly adhered to. All risk is carefully evaluated and health and safety in all activities are accorded the highest priority, with comprehensive reviews by the governing body. The wrench of leaving a school that has provided immense support and guidance to parents, as well as their children, is given great consideration and the school does everything it can to ease the move into the next stage in pupils' lives.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management define the success of the school. The past four years have seen many changes. A new head was appointed last year and a deputy last month, both after considerable periods when leadership was in doubt. Even in these circumstances the school has continued to function well because everything it seeks to do is underpinned by sound policy and a caring philosophy which puts equality of opportunity at the centre of its agenda. This is a school that fights for the benefit of its children. Monitoring of teaching is good. The introduction of unannounced lesson observations, to ensure that the general lot of pupils is seen, is wholly justified. To the credit of teachers the results are positive. The very recent appointment of a deputy headteacher has strengthened the senior management team. A problem the school faces in the future is that many staff are nearing retirement. It is good that the management recognises this and are planning very carefully to minimise its impact. Governors are powerful and influential. They support and question the headteacher equally. They are rightly proud of their school and fully understand the challenges that lay ahead. A large surplus in the budget has recently arisen. There are clear plans as to how this money will be spent but these will not happen in time for pupils due to leave to benefit from the resources accorded to them.

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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	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	1	
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?	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?	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	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	NA
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	NA
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
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	NA
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	NA
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	NA
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	NA
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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Bleasdale House Community Special

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26 January 2006

Hello

I came to your school a while ago to see how you were getting on. I hope the staff will be able to explain to you that I liked what I saw and I want to reassure your mums and dads that you are in good hands. This is a good school that cares and never stops trying to help you.

Lots of interesting things go on in the classrooms and the residence. You try very hard and join in as much as you can. The school is well managed. You are well taught but I'd like your teachers to try to be more adventurous in the methods they use. It would be good if older pupil could get into other schools more and for you to see changes in the accommodation before you leave.

All the best

Alastair Younger (Lead inspector)