



Thornton Cleveleys Red Marsh School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 119897
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280683
Inspection dates 6 December 2005 to 6 December 2005
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Holly Road
School category	Community		Thornton-Cleveleys
Age range of pupils	3 to 19		Lancashire, FY5 4HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01253 868451
Number on roll	54	Fax number	01253 868451
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Pat Naylor
Date of previous inspection	1 July 2000	Headteacher	Anita Tidswell

Age group 3 to 19	Inspection dates 6 December 2005 - 6 December 2005	Inspection number 280683
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Introduction

An additional inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

This is a special school for 54 boys and girls aged 3-19. They all have severe, profound or complex learning difficulties. Virtually all pupils arrive at the very earliest stages of learning and personal development. Some come from disadvantaged families and almost half are entitled to free school meals. There are almost no pupils of minority ethnic background. The school is included in the local authority's reorganisation negotiations. In the past year it has appointed a new headteacher and deputy and reconstituted its governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The headteacher, parents, pupils and the inspector agree that this is a good, happy school. It has a wonderful atmosphere. Pupils are delightful. They work extremely hard to overcome their many difficulties and are very cheerful and welcoming. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding, they attend whenever they can and are exceptionally well cared for. Extensive links with other schools and professionals contribute enormously to pupils' well-being and education.

From the Foundation Stage upwards, good teaching helps pupils to make good progress. This is measured against precise personal targets, using assessments which reflect the fact that their learning difficulties prevent them from reaching standards expected in mainstream schools. Teachers are particularly good at planning work with clear learning objectives but the huge range of ability in each class means that there are times when individuals are not fully challenged. The curriculum is good. It is carefully varied to meet the huge range of ability and wide age range of pupils and many activities give pupils exciting experiences away from the classroom.

The new headteacher and deputy are successfully building on the traditional strengths of the school and have been particularly effective in involving all staff in school improvement. This has led to a strong, shared sense of purpose and growing morale. Governors are supportive but not coming up with enough of their own ideas for improving the school. There are many grounds for optimism and none for worrying about future improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- developing classroom organisation to ensure that all pupils are challenged to the full.
- encouraging governors to play a greater role in bringing about improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As the school correctly identifies, pupils achieve well. Parents are unanimous in their agreement. When they are admitted, all pupils are performing well below national averages, often at the lowest point that can be measured. There is huge variation in the speed at which they learn. Pupils with the greatest degree of difficulty remain at a very low level until they leave but many others make enough progress for their attainment to be compared with Year 2 or 3 pupils in mainstream schools. Last year, 34 of the 42 pupils assessed made progress in all aspects of numeracy, literacy, science, ICT and their personal development. Test results suggested that eight pupils were not making enough progress in one or two areas, but nearly all of these pupils had profound or complex difficulties and the reason that tests did not clearly identify progress was that the gains being made were smaller than could be measured. Reviews were held

for these pupils and very detailed individual targets were set to allow their progress to be monitored. On subsequent review all these pupils are making demonstrably good progress against these targets. This is a great reassurance to parents. There is no significant underachievement of any group of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is an area where the school meets with outstanding success. Parents are thrilled with the progress made by their children. Typical of their comments are, 'progress in language and socialisation are phenomenal' and 'life in school is an absolute joy.' Pupils attend whenever they can. Medical difficulties account for most absence. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There are serene moments as pupils reflect in silence before school starts and when individuals in turn lead the school in prayer before mealtimes. Excellent attention is paid to helping pupils develop their understanding of different cultures, for instance through participating in dance or music celebrations. The school is one of only twelve in the county that has been designated a 'Creative School'. It has also won 'National Healthy School Status.' Pupils behave exceptionally well and work hard. The difficulties faced by pupils with autism account for the few serious incidents on record. Pupils learn about the many risks they face as a result of their vulnerability. They frequently contribute to the community, for instance by supporting the local hospice or hosting school events for local people. The progress they make in improving their communication and social skills makes a huge contribution to their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's monitoring of teaching and learning suggests that they are good and inspection confirms this. In all classes, pupils are grouped by age rather than ability. Teachers are very precise in their preparation of activities to ensure that a huge range of need is met. Excellent planning helps them to achieve this. Each lesson includes a clear gradation of learning outcomes, closely matched to individual pupils' targets. An English lesson about the story 'Treasure Island', for instance, developed speaking and listening skills ranging from making eye contact with the narrator to joining in with discussion or re-telling a sequence of events. Classroom assistants make a huge contribution. They work with great effectiveness, often helping individuals. The main difficulty staff face is in ensuring that all pupils are working to the full. No single group of pupils fares better or worse than others. Occasionally, higher attaining pupils are left to study independently for too long, at other times lower attaining ones are not fully engaged and just when everything seems balanced the mid-range pupils don't get enough attention. This slightly slows pupils' progress but the system that causes the problem more than compensates for this by promoting a high degree of social inclusion for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good. In the Foundation Stage it focuses well on stimulating children to learn through experience, discovery and play. Up to Post 16 it covers all subjects of the National Curriculum carefully adapted to pupils' needs and including a well developed programme of personal social and health education. The Post 16 curriculum very effectively prepares students for adult life by promoting the basic skills of literacy and numeracy alongside extensive and imaginative work and training activities. Few opportunities are missed to enrich the curriculum. Learning is taken out of the classroom through frequent trips, often linked to topics being studied. Many visitors share their experiences and skills with pupils. A professional dance troupe, for instance, is working with a group of pupils with profound and multiple difficulties to help them express themselves through movement. Extensive use is made of library and museum loans to provide stimulating artefacts to bring life to lessons. Pupils with complex needs have their lives greatly enriched through approaches that stimulate all of their senses. Many pupils benefit from sharing learning experiences in other schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding feature of the school. Parents express total confidence in the school's ability to keep their children safe and happy. Impeccable attention is paid to ensuring the school remains a safe and healthy place where pupils are well protected. Staff are particularly well trained in preventing accidents and moving and handling pupils who depend upon them. Dignity is preserved at all times through sensitive management of intimate and personal care. A full-time nurse ensures that medical concerns are very well covered. Extensive cooperation with many other agencies ensures that pupils are offered support well beyond school issues. Weekly meetings draw all of these parties together to discuss pupils. Careers' guidance is outstanding, greatly helping to ease the concerns of pupils and parents at a potentially traumatic time for both.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has accurately described leadership and management as good. This is also how parents see it. The new headteacher has brought a change of style to leadership whilst not undermining the work done by her predecessor. Staff morale has been greatly enhanced by increasing the involvement of all parties in decision-making, self-evaluation and school improvement and there is a strong ethic of teamwork. Continuing professional development is a hallmark of the school. It is closely linked to the agenda for improvement. A review by 'Investors In People' recognised this, commenting 'The head and deputy have maintained a positive attitude to change and

a commitment to developing staff to build a strong school that can adapt and cope with future changes'. Self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate. It celebrates strengths but does not shy away from self-criticism. When teaching is observed, for instance, teachers are left with a clear idea of how it can be improved. Parents are regularly consulted and their views are closely listened to, as are the views of learners. Governors have supported the school well but recognise that it is now time for them to contribute more to self-evaluation and school improvement. No major issues for improvement were identified by the previous inspection but the school has acted effectively on minor weaknesses that were reported on and has improved as a result. The new leadership team has vision and determination and the school is in a healthy financial state so the future looks good, pending the local authority's reorganisation agenda.

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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?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
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	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	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	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

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Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School
Holly Road
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FY5 4HH
7 December 2005

Dear all

I visited your school the other day and thoroughly enjoyed myself. I didn't get to see everyone but thanks to those of you who helped me to understand what the school is like. I visited to see how you were getting on. I liked what I saw. I have written this report to tell everyone that Red Marsh is a good school.

So what makes it good?

Yourselves: you are polite, well behaved and hard working. It's very obvious that you love coming to school. This is probably because you are exceptionally well cared for whilst you are there.

Your teachers: they are good and with skilled help from their assistants they help you to learn well and make good progress.

Your headteacher: she's good and she knows how the school can keep getting better.

There was just one other thing. Before I left school I had a chat with Mrs Tidswell and we agreed that in a few lessons teachers were not making sure that all of you were learning as much as possible. I'm sure you realise that they've got their hands full, so please try to do your bit.

All the best

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)