



Spalding the Garth School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120752
LEA LINCOLNSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280883
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector Ms. Sue Aldridge LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Pinchbeck Road
School category	Community special		PE11 1QF
Age range of pupils	3 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01775725566
Number on roll	29	Fax number	01775768829
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.J Barnes
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Linda Dowson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The Garth is a small mixed, day, special school for pupils across the full age range. Of the 29 pupils currently at the school, 18 have severe learning difficulties, and five of these also have autism. Eleven pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. As a result of their learning difficulties, pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment. Almost all pupils are white. A few are of mixed race. Families come from a range of socio-economic circumstances. There are two children in public care. The school's accommodation is used by a National Children's Home (NCH) playgroup. Although there is uncertainty over the school's future there are no firm proposals for reorganisation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for all its pupils, including children at the Foundation Stage. Although pupils do not reach standards expected nationally, this is because of the nature of their learning difficulties. Pupils make satisfactory progress, and their personal development is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of pupils' personal development, and the care, guidance and support provided. In other areas, the school's evaluation is over-generous, although it correctly identifies areas for development. Teaching is satisfactory. There are many good features of teaching, but these are not common to all teachers, because there is no shared view of what good teaching is. Monitoring of teaching is not focused enough. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and this makes The Garth a happy school. High standards of care, good support and guidance all add to the positive atmosphere in the school. Staff work well in partnership with parents and carers, who have a high regard for the work done in the school. Leadership and management are both satisfactory, and so is the school's capacity for improvement. There are good opportunities for staff to attend training, and this has helped to secure satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are now better equipped to meet the needs of pupils with autism. Parents acknowledge the dedication and commitment of staff, who work hard, and have a large number of responsibilities. Subject leadership is not efficient, as staff wear too many hats at once.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a shared understanding of what good teaching is and use this as a guide when evaluating lessons. - Make subject leadership and management more manageable.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has a good range of information about how well pupils are doing, and it is clear from this that all make sound progress. For instance, most achieve a high percentage of the targets set in their Individual Education Plans (IEP's). Where fewer targets are reached, there is a good explanation for this. For instance, a few pupils have complex medical conditions, or have had surgery, both of which result in absence from school. The school also sets targets in areas that it has identified as in need of extra attention, such as handwriting and ICT. Pupils make good progress towards their ICT targets, they are particularly well motivated when working with new technology. Information on how well pupils are doing is also compared with the results of pupils in similar schools. This information indicates that pupils as a whole do no better and no worse than most pupils with similar needs nationally. There is no firm evidence to suggest that certain groups do better or worse than others. As numbers in the school are so small, reliable comparisons are not possible. Since the last inspection, the school has increased the number of opportunities for pupils to have their achievements

recognised nationally. Now, all pupils leave with certificates that celebrate their successes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. They take part enthusiastically in clubs too. They get on well with one another and very well with adults and visitors. Behaviour is good in lessons, in the dining hall and during lunchtime clubs. Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school. There are no exclusions. In lessons, pupils co-operate well with the adults who support them, and this helps them to learn. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to socialise with one another, and to learn socially acceptable behaviour, as the school uses the community widely for visits. As part of the employment graduation award, older pupils develop confidence, and understanding of the differences between school, college and work. As they tackle new challenges, such as cooking simple dishes and shopping, their self-help skills develop, and their self-esteem grows. Older pupils have opportunities to work in teams when they take part in enterprise activities. Through the personal, social and health education programme, the importance of healthy and safe lifestyles is brought home to pupils. The school's work in this respect has been externally recognised through the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils readily accept safety rules in school, such as the need to wear lab coats and goggles in the science room. Older pupils take responsibility for tasks such as clearing away after lunch, or supporting younger pupils in doing jobs in school. School Council representatives take their responsibilities seriously. One pupil described the Council's most important success as arranging for tomato sauce to be provided when chips are served at lunchtimes. Good provision for pupils' moral development includes opportunities for pupils to raise funds for others who are less fortunate, such as organising a coffee morning for Oxfam. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced multi-cultural awareness weeks, which provide a rich variety of experiences of other cultures and customs. Collective worship and a prayer said daily after lunch provides opportunities for quiet reflection. Parents are pleased with the way pupils develop personally. One wrote of her son, a recent arrival at the school, 'I have already seen a great improvement in him with regard to confidence and general attitude'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are several good features of teaching, but teaching is not uniformly good across the school. All teachers plan well for pupils of different abilities. They base their plans on secure assessment and thorough knowledge of the pupils. There are clear objectives for individuals and groups. These are not routinely shared with pupils though. Certain teachers do this well. For instance in science, slips of paper, with text and symbols, were given to pupils and read aloud with them. Pupils were in no doubt about what

they were expected to learn. At the end of the lesson, progress was reviewed. The slip of paper was pasted on to a sheet and a written comment added as a result of the review. Pupils knew how well they had done, and what they needed to do to improve. This good practice was not seen in all lessons. Teaching assistants make a real difference. Teamwork between them and teachers is well developed. As a result, pupils are engaged productively most of the time in lessons. Teaching assistants often lead small groups, and they do this well. They also manage pupils skilfully, so that learning is not interrupted. Since the last inspection, staff have increased their skills in teaching pupils with autism. They now make effective use of particular strategies that support the learning of this group of pupils. The use of ICT to support learning has also improved. Resources for this subject have increased, and teachers make effective use of these.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

By taking advantage of the flexibility allowed in special schools, and planning carefully, a suitable range of learning experiences is provided in mixed age classes. Requirements are met. For certain pupils, the curriculum is modified to ensure that individual needs are met, and parents appreciate this. One noted that extra swimming sessions for her daughter had the result that, 'One of her most interactive times is bath time'. To take account of the nature of pupils' learning difficulties, the school has changed the timetable to allow history and geography to be taught in a block of two and a half days each term. This enables visits and first hand experiences to take place. The school finds pupils more responsive in this arrangement than in weekly lessons. For a small school, with few staff, there is a good range of extra-curricular clubs as well as residential school journeys. There are also good links with the community. Local employers provide work experience, there is a college link course, and some opportunities for pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers. Older pupils are well prepared for the next step. During the inspection, the school had a vacancy for a teaching assistant, and this had a noticeable impact in the class for older pupils. Here, there were too few adults to make sure that all pupils took part in the full range of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe and caring environment in which pupils feel secure and valued. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and creates a good atmosphere for learning. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety and lifestyle choices. For instance, they learn about road safety and have a range of puddings to choose from at lunchtime. Several select fruit or yoghurt rather than sponge and custard. Pupils with complex medical conditions, and hearing or visual impairments are well supported by health professionals who visit regularly and work closely with staff to meet pupils' needs. There is effective liaison with social services' personnel where this is necessary. The Connexions officer plays an important part in

preparing older pupils for the time when they leave school. Targets are set for pupils to work towards whilst preparing themselves and making decisions. The full range of necessary policies and plans guides this aspect of the school's work, including a draft major incident plan. Training in child protection is kept up to date, although there is a long wait for staff to attend courses provided by the local authority.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In several ways, the headteacher provides good leadership. She encourages productive relationships with parents and other agencies, has high expectations, and provides a good role model in her teaching. She knows the pupils very well, and keeps a close watch on their performance. She knows what needs to be done to improve the school. She monitors teaching and provides constructive feedback to teachers. However, lessons are not graded, and teachers do not have a common view of what makes a good lesson. Good practice is not replicated across the school. There is no deputy headteacher or middle managers, so teachers share responsibilities for all subjects and whole-school aspects between them. This is a heavy burden. Consideration has not been given to strategies for making the process more manageable, such as grouping similar subjects together, like the humanities, or focusing on a few subjects only each year. As a result, there is little time for subject leaders to carry out their onerous responsibilities. Nonetheless, some good development has taken place, but inevitably certain subjects have been neglected. Strong staff commitment ensures that the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Staff are well supported in developing their skills through formal training. For instance, training as a higher-level teaching assistant has enabled one member of staff to lead the teaching of children in the Foundation Stage. Governors are most supportive. They recently challenged the local education authority over the matter of the school's future and they do not duck difficult issues such as the need to make staff redundant in order to balance income and expenditure. Their curriculum committee analyses parental views, and the school responds well to parents' few criticisms and suggestions.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	3

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

I enjoyed my visit to your school yesterday. Thank you for making me feel welcome and for keeping me company at lunchtime. I came to school to see how you were getting on and to see whether there are any things that could be done better. The main things that you do well are: - You behave well and are keen to learn. - You enjoy coming to school. - You get on well with the staff and with one another. - As you get older you become more independent, and learn about adult life, including working and going to college. These are the main things that people working in the school do well. - They set work that is interesting and which helps you to learn. - They work hard and put on clubs for you too. - They work together well, take good care of you, and give you the help you need. - They listen to you, and your parents, and take seriously what you say. The main things that could be done better are: - Teachers need to agree what are the best ways of teaching you. - Teachers should not do too many things at once. I hope that you are all keeping up the good work, and I wish you all the best for the future.