



The Forest School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121775
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281097
Inspection dates 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Kath Halifax CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Park Lane
School category	Community special		Knaresborough
Age range of pupils	2 to 16		North Yorkshire HG5 0DQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01423 864 583
Number on roll	126	Fax number	01423 861 145
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Guy Warren
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Uden

Age group 2 to 16	Inspection dates 17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	Inspection number 281097
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

All pupils who attend this school have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; all have statements to meet their special educational needs. The population has changed since the last inspection. Originally a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, now only 43% of pupils have this need, 15% have severe learning difficulties and 10% have physical difficulties. The school also now admits pupils with more complex needs. Currently 20% of pupils have autism, 14% speech and communication difficulties, with the remainder having social, emotional and behavioural needs. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage. The percentage entitled to free school meals is average. The local authority provides respite care for four pupils. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of pupils of this age. The school was awarded Investors in People in July 2005.

The local authority is reviewing its provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It is improving and moving forward at a good rate and has the capacity to continue to do so. Pupils' achievement is good as a result of good teaching. However, some teachers do not make sufficient use of targets in individual education plans (IEPs) and on such occasions this reduces pupils' rate of progress. The curriculum is good. It is outstanding for pupils in Years 10 and 11. As a result of this and excellent teaching for this age group, these pupils make extremely good progress and achieve highly. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but adults do not always provide enough guidance for children in their learning, especially those with more complex needs, during adult-led activities. This limits the progress the pupils make. Excellent provision for pupils' personal development alongside outstanding support, guidance and links with other professionals is instrumental in the very positive attitude and behaviour of pupils of all capabilities. Through excellent links with local businesses and schools, pupils grow in confidence and become responsible citizens. Attendance is good. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The monitoring of the school's performance is good and managers are accurate in their evaluation of the school. Pupils and parents speak very highly of the school. Every pupil is valued and staff ensure all have equal opportunities to learn. Taking account of the cost of educating each pupil, pupils' achievements, including the number who are helped to transfer to mainstream education, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more guidance for children's learning in the Nursery, especially for those with complex needs, so they make better progress.
- Ensure all teachers follow the good practice of using targets in IEPs to enable all pupils to get the best out of their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. It is outstanding in Years 10 and 11. All pupils leave the school with nationally recognised awards including Entry Level Certificate in a number of subjects. In addition, some pupils gain GCSEs in up to three subjects, while others gain the Award Scheme and Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze award. This, together with the outstanding provision for pupils' personal development, enables pupils to move onto open employment, or into further education, including courses such as health and childcare, alongside pupils from mainstream schools.

Pupils in Years 1 to 9 make good progress in the knowledge and skills they acquire. Pupils with autism and other additional needs, such as visual or hearing impairment, make good progress because of good links with other professionals and skilled support by teaching assistants. Achievement for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. It is good for the five-year-olds who work alongside pupils in Year 1. Children

in the Nursery make good progress in some aspects of their development, including good gains in speaking and listening when working with the speech and language therapist, but many opportunities are missed to extend children's skills during adult-directed activities. This reduces their rate of progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because of the excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although the majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds, pupils respect and celebrate diversity. Through a number of subjects they begin to understand local and national issues; they also understand the need for sustainability, with even the youngest children saving their banana skins for compost.

Pupils are very proud of their school and of their achievements. They are extremely well behaved. Those who have complex behaviours because of their conditions are helped to manage their behaviour extremely well, enabling them to be educated alongside their peers. Pupils are very well prepared for their future lives. In addition to improving their numeracy and literacy, from a young age they learn to work as part of a team so that by Year 11 they confidently hold 'board meetings' to consider, for example, the progress and development of their 'Forest Party Company' and the 'Travelling Fair' which they are taking to local primary schools. Through regular class discussions they gain confidence, as demonstrated by older pupils giving an electronic presentation alongside mainstream schools to an audience of over 300 people. Through a very good programme for personal, social and health education, pupils are learning to adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is outstanding in Years 10 and 11 where external awards motivate pupils and teachers. Teachers in these year groups have extremely high expectations and give pupils the confidence to have a go. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and the introduction of subject specialist teachers is contributing to improved achievement. Homework is used very effectively to aid progress in Years 7 to 11.

Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6. Teachers provide activities that make learning interesting and meaningful and they are gaining confidence in matching tasks to the different learning styles of their pupils. As a result, pupils of all capabilities usually learn at a good rate. All pupils have suitable IEP targets, but these are not always referred to in teachers' planning or in lessons. On such occasions pupils' progress slows. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the Nursery, but opportunities are missed to question children, to encourage them to interact with each other, and to

guide those who need extra help. This slows their rate of learning. In Years 1 to 11, pupils with autism learn at a good rate because staff are skilled and use approaches that are well suited to their needs. Similarly those with communication difficulties learn well because of the close cooperation between teachers, teaching assistants and the speech and language therapist.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Managers have been modest in grading the curriculum satisfactory; it is good, with the work-related learning programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 being outstanding. The curriculum meets requirements and the time allocated to English, mathematics, and personal, social, health and citizenship education is reflected in pupils' achievements and personal development. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Until recently, Nursery children had total freedom in choosing their own activities. Many children found this difficult to cope with because of their learning difficulties and this adversely affected their progress. Adults now guide the children in their activities which has helped, but in order to increase their progress further, they need more direction in learning to play.

The curriculum is successful in promoting healthy, safe lifestyles. In addition, sporting activities and daily routines contribute significantly to pupils' growing independence. Over one third of pupils now spend time working with pupils in mainstream schools. In addition to contributing to pupils' academic and social development, the carefully thought out programme has enabled a significant number to return to mainstream education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils of all ages and capabilities receive outstanding care and support. Child protection procedures are in place and understood by staff. Health and safety procedures are robust. Where appropriate, assessments of the risks presented by individual pupils are undertaken. Equally, the assessment of potential risks on visits out of school and in lessons is noted. Very good links with other professionals contribute significantly to pupils' well-being, especially those with physical difficulties or mental health needs. The appointment of a speech and language therapist and her work in the classrooms is contributing considerably to the progress of pupils with communication needs. Pupils report they feel safe and say their views are taken into account. They appreciate the weekly 'drop-in' session provided by the school nurse and support staff. Pupils are prepared very well for life after school and for the move from the primary to secondary department, saying they feel more grown up in a different uniform.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall; the leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Her in-depth knowledge of a very wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities has enabled her to restructure the school's provision to meet the very diverse needs and demands of the changing population. She works especially hard to provide an environment in which all staff and pupils feel safe and part of the community. She has made some very good appointments of teachers who are specialists in their specific subjects; as a result, pupils' achievements have improved.

Dedicated and skilled senior managers ably support the headteacher. Over the past year, the senior leadership team has been extended to include an assistant head. The success of the team is evident in the school's improving provision and pupils' achievement. Daily briefings between managers and with staff ensure that all are kept informed and this contributes to the smooth running of the school.

Governance is good. Although there are vacancies on the governing body, all aspects of their work are covered well and members are not afraid to challenge decisions, especially in financial matters. Governors report they find the 'visiting days' very useful. Good systems are in place to monitor what is happening in classrooms, both in providing high quality care and in tracking pupils' progress. A useful analysis of this has begun, though managers recognise the need for this to be more detailed. Nevertheless, the information is used effectively; for example, in setting pupils by ability in English and mathematics which is contributing to improved achievement in Years 7 to 11. Challenging targets have been set for individuals and the whole school, with progress towards these being checked at senior leadership level and at governors' meetings. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school is well placed for this to continue. Development planning has improved and is now good. Staff, parents and pupils say they feel consulted and part of school improvement.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

As you know I met a number of you during the recent inspection of your school. Thank you for talking to me, for being so polite and friendly, and for helping me in my work. I especially enjoyed sitting in on the Forest Party Company board meeting.

What I liked most about the school

- You work hard, are extremely well behaved and take advantage of the good learning opportunities.
- Outstanding teaching and an imaginative curriculum help those of you in Years 10 and 11 to make extremely good progress and gain good qualifications.
- Links with other schools and businesses improve your social skills and encourage you to become good citizens.
- Links with other professionals such as the speech and language therapist contribute to your achievements and well-being.

What I have asked your teachers and governors to do now

- Help children in the nursery, especially those with more complex needs, make better progress by giving them more help in their activities.
- Make sure all teachers use the targets in your IEPs in all lessons to help you make even better progress.

I enjoyed my short time with you and wish you well for the future.