



Cleaswell Hill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122382
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281247
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Special	School address	School Avenue
School category	Community special		Guide Post
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Choppington, Northumberland NE62 5DJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 823182
Number on roll	88	Fax number	01670 827044
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Wendy Marchetti
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr Kevin Burdis

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Cleaswell Hill School is situated near Morpeth in Northumberland. Most of the pupils, all of whom are White British, come from the neighbouring towns and villages of Ashington, Bedlington, Morpeth and Cramlington, but a few travel from other parts of the county. A few are from Traveller backgrounds. At the time of the inspection, three pupils were being looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. All pupils have statements of special educational need, the majority for moderate learning difficulties. However, an increasing proportion has emotional and behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder often complicated by additional more complex needs. Owing to their difficulties, most pupils start school with levels of skills well below those expected for their age. Although the school caters for pupils from five years old, at the time of the inspection, the youngest pupil was aged eight. Most of the oldest pupils have spent most of their school career at the school, but a good proportion of pupils in Years 3 to 9 have transferred from mainstream schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that this is a good school where pupils really enjoy learning and achieve well. Virtually all of the parents who responded to the inspection concur with this evaluation. Pupils start school with limited skills in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), but they make good progress overall as they move through the school, although it is more consistent in mathematics and science than in reading and writing. This is partly due to the nature of most pupils' learning difficulties, but also because the school's procedures for tracking are not yet sufficiently coherent to enable the school to check easily that all pupils are consistently making the progress expected of them. When they leave, all pupils have gained a good range of qualifications that, along with their good personal skills, means they are well equipped to move on to the next phase of their lives. This good achievement results from good teaching and learning and the excellent levels of care, guidance and support provided for pupils by teachers and teaching assistants. Underpinning all of this work is the very positive ethos in the school which reflects the good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior managers. They have successfully established a shared vision for the school that is centred on a strong sense of teamwork between pupils and adults and on celebrating the achievements of each individual. Governors are very supportive of the school and have recently become more involved, but their role in monitoring the work of the school is relatively underdeveloped. As a result, their contribution to school improvement planning is limited. Overall, the school gives good value for money and is in strong position to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in reading and writing by establishing a coherent system to track the progress pupils are making towards the targets set for them.
- Increase the role of governors in checking the progress the school is making towards its priorities for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, backgrounds and learning difficulties achieve well. From a low start when pupils join the school, they make good progress in all aspects of their learning. In Years 3 to 6, they make good progress in developing basic literacy and numeracy and investigative skills. As a result, by Year 6, most can read, write legibly and have secure number skills. Their listening skills are good. More able pupils can use these basic skills in different situations and express their ideas and opinions confidently. Overall, this means that pupils are well equipped to broaden their learning in Years 7 to 11 in which pupils continue to build well on these basic skills. They make particularly good progress in speaking and listening, mathematics and science. The school has correctly identified that improving pupils' progress in reading and writing is the main

priority for the next two years because there are a few pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, who do not make as consistently good progress in these areas as they do in other subjects. This year the school has introduced a specific programme aimed to tackle this which is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress in reading. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are given good opportunities to work on projects with plenty of individual support. Consequently, in Year 11, virtually all pupils gain external accreditation in English, mathematics, ICT and science. Most also gain a qualification in design and technology as well as various other certificates from work experience and college placements. All pupils gain ASDAN qualifications. They are confident communicators. As a result, pupils are well prepared to move on to the next phase of their learning at college or in work-related training.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils really enjoy school and tackle enthusiastically any tasks they are set. Parents endorsed this view through their responses to a questionnaire. In fact, several parents whose children joined the school after being in mainstream schools stated that, for the first time in their lives their children were enjoying school. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is also reflected in the good attendance of most pupils. However, there are a few who, despite the best efforts of the school, do not attend regularly enough so that attendance overall is average. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. This is testament to the high quality support they receive because a good proportion find behaving well all the time and coping with new challenges difficult. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating well, taking plenty of exercise and how to take care of themselves. They make an excellent contribution to the local community and have a real understanding of how they can help others. They influence many aspects of the school's work and become more and more responsible and independent. When this is linked to their good basic skills, they leave the school well equipped to take their place in the wider society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A clear whole school approach to the structure and planning of lessons results in a consistently good quality of teaching and learning across the school. Teachers share the aims of lessons and make their expectations very clear and explicit to pupils at the start so they are clear about what they will be learning. As a result, lessons are calm and orderly learning experiences. On the few occasions when the behaviour of a pupil is not acceptable, teachers and teaching assistants manage these situations very well so that the learning of other pupils is hardly disrupted at all. Teachers use open-ended questions well to check pupils' understanding and to extend their language skills. This

makes a good contribution to the very good progress pupils make in speaking and listening. Teaching assistants make a very important contribution to pupils' learning. The very close working relationship with the teachers means they are very well briefed on their role in lessons. Practical activities are a strong feature of many lessons which gives pupils good opportunities to practise their basic skills in real situations. Pupils are set short term targets for learning based on their annual reviews, but there is scope for these targets to be more systematically and sharply focused on what pupils need to learn next, particularly in reading and writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. As pupils move through the school, the emphasis gradually changes from developing pupils' basic skills to providing them with opportunities to use and apply these skills in different situations. The extent to which pupils are expected to work independently on their own projects and challenges also increases. As a result, the oldest pupils, as long as they have a clear brief, are confident, independent learners. Their work in school, all of which leads to appropriate external accreditation, is complemented very well by college placements, work experience and other work-related learning experiences. Where appropriate, arrangements are made for some pupils to have lessons in a mainstream school. As a result, pupils are well prepared to leave school. However, the school has identified that there is more scope to extend the range of external qualifications further and plans to introduce GCSE courses next year in science, design and technology and art and design. The curriculum is enhanced well by visits and visitors to school and other activities such as residential trips to centres in Britain, France and Norway.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding and reflects its ethos of concern for the individual. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils, for making sure they are protected and cared for are excellent. However, the most notable feature is the extremely good level of guidance and support provided for pupils, particularly by the teaching assistants. Because they are aware of the very different needs of each pupil, they are able to give individuals the support they need in order to succeed. They also play a key role in specific support plans for pupils who are dealing with difficult challenges in their lives which affect their ability to cope in school. The school works very closely with external agencies to make sure that any support provided is as comprehensive as possible and that pupils are carefully guided to help them make the right choices when they leave school. As a result, the pupils, many of whom are extremely vulnerable, grow rapidly in self-confidence and self-belief both academically and personally. The quality of the care and support provided by the school was commended by several parents. One, who wrote, 'I strongly believe that my daughter is the person she is today because of Cleaswell Hill School ...' perfectly encapsulates how the school's ethos is reflected in its everyday work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. Parents agree because the headteacher has successfully created an inclusive approach to school improvement that is based on canvassing the views of all stakeholders. The views of pupils and parents are sought regularly and taken into account. A clear structure of performance management for teachers and teaching assistants has been introduced which means that all staff have the opportunities to extend their skills, to pursue their own interests and to express their ideas. As a result, the school knows itself well and there is a shared vision for the school focused on raising standards and developing the provision for pupils. New initiatives are monitored by classroom observations and regular discussions between senior managers and those staff responsible for their implementation. As a result, new ideas are introduced effectively. However, the procedures to monitor the effect of these on pupils' progress are less systematic. The school's method of tracking pupils' progress is neither refined enough to measure easily the effect of new approaches on learning nor linked closely enough to pupils' targets to check all pupils are making progress at the expected rate. Governors, though very supportive, have not devised a structured approach to checking the work of the school and the progress it is making towards its stated priorities. As a result, they are not in a secure position to contribute fully to school improvement planning. Nevertheless, the school has made good progress recently and is in a strong position to improve further.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	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	2	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	3	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

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23 May 2006

Dear Pupils and Students

Thank you for welcoming me to your school this week for the inspection. I am grateful for your help which really assisted me in getting a good view of your school. Although you all were really helpful, I would particularly like to thank the group of students who sat down with me and discussed your school.

I agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. I was particularly impressed with how much you enjoy being at school. I think that this is one of main reasons why you do well. However, you are also taught well so that when you leave school you are well prepared for moving on to college or work. In addition, Mr Burdis and the staff have created a really positive atmosphere in school. At the heart of this are the excellent levels of care, guidance and support you get.

I have asked Mr Burdis and the governors to do two things to make your school even better. Firstly, to work out ways of linking the targets you have more closely to their ways of checking how well you are doing; secondly, to make sure the governors are more involved in monitoring the work of the school so they can contribute more to its improvement.

Thank you again for helping me and may I take this opportunity of wishing you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andy Margerison

(Lead inspector)