



# The Grove Special School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122385  
**LEA** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281250  
**Inspection dates** 12 July 2006 to 12 July 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr David Smith

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Grove Gardens
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Tweedmouth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19		Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 306390
<b>Number on roll</b>	32	<b>Fax number</b>	01289 306994
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Laurence J Pearson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Brown

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 19	12 July 2006 - 12 July 2006	281250

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Grove is a small special school educating pupils with a very wide age range and diverse learning needs. The number of pupils in each age group varies from year to year and currently there is only one pupil in the Foundation Stage. Pupils are admitted from a wide catchment area. All pupils have statements of special educational needs: 28 have severe learning difficulties and 4 have profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are significantly more boys than girls. No pupil is in public care but many are supported by respite care. A high percentage of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupil speaks English as an additional language.

## 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's overall effectiveness is good. It gives good value for money. The care, guidance and support pupils receive and their personal development are outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes, their attendance is good and their behaviour is outstanding. The school works exceptionally well with others to promote pupils' well-being and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils achieve well. Assessment information is used effectively to set challenging targets for pupils' performance. However, there is insufficient use of this information in the planning of lessons and, as a result, pupils' progress, though good is not outstanding. Despite the difficulty of providing for pupils' wide age range and diverse learning needs, the curriculum is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the good range of enrichment activities that are provided in school, the locality and wider community. The school leaders, strongly led by the headteacher, promote a calm and purposeful ethos and the staff team works exceptionally well together. The contribution of the teaching assistants is a particular strength. Procedures for ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils are exceptional. Governors know the school well and, as a result, provide support and challenge to the school leaders. The school is aware of its strengths and areas for development but the criteria it uses to judge its progress make too little reference to improvements in pupils' achievement. Since the last inspection there has been a very determined and effective drive to improve the school's accommodation. Improvements have been good, overall, and there is capacity for still more.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for students aged 16 to 19 is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, students' achievement is good. Despite the small number of students, the staff are innovative and provide a good curriculum. Work placements in the school and locality help to promote students' independence. The students are excellent role models for the younger pupils and children in the school. Students make good progress in their life skills, such as their ability to use domestic appliances and prepare basic meals. There is, however, a limited choice of courses for the students in the locality and the school is working to extend the provision of accredited activities.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the use of assessment information in the planning of lessons.
- Develop targets for school improvement that are more clearly focused on raising pupils' achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The inspection agrees with the school that achievement is good. Comparison with national standards is not appropriate because of the extent of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Comprehensive assessment information is used effectively to establish challenging targets. Pupils make at least good progress towards their targets and achieve well.

All pupils make good progress in the development of their communication skills. They make particularly good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. The attractive and well stocked library helps to give reading a high profile in the school and the higher attaining pupils make good progress in their reading. These pupils are challenged effectively to develop their writing skills with increasing levels of imagination and independence. Numeracy tasks are made relevant to every day life and this helps to promote good achievement. Pupils make good progress in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the full ability range. Pupils enjoy the opportunity for practical activities in science and achieve well. Attractive displays of pupils' work show their good achievement in art and design. There are also many models on display; for example, of tepees constructed as part of a North American Indian project. Pupils have good levels of success in a range of sporting activities, for example, in a 'kwik cricket' competition and in a coaching award, as part of the sports coordinator initiative. Achievement in personal, social and health education is exceptional.

Some pupils make exceptional progress, overall, and this helps their smooth return to a mainstream school. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to study accredited courses, for example GCSE art and design, in mainstream schools. There is no evidence of differences in achievement between different groups of pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding rather than good, as judged by the school. Parents report that their children thoroughly enjoy their time in school and that the care provided is excellent. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes and are only away from school when their absence is unavoidable. The senior pupils and students are superb role models, and this helps to promote the outstanding behaviour in the school. There is an exceptional ethos throughout the school which helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and boost their confidence. Whole-school activities and celebrations, such as assemblies and shared lunchtimes are extremely positive occasions. Pupils develop strong relationships and, as a result, work very well in pairs and groups. Pupils respond well to the good opportunities provided to become more aware of their own culture and the diversity of cultures in the world in which they live. The use of the school minibus to visit places provides good opportunities for pupils to broaden their experience, for example by learning about the work of local artists. The school provides a wealth of

visits further afield. Senior pupils appreciate the time they share with their friends and staff while away on their residential visit. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and this is reflected in the fact that, for example, pupils take part in a good range of physical activities. Pupils also learn about and understand the need to keep themselves safe in school and outside. The school council is very well established and pupils make a very valuable contribution to the school community. Recently, they successfully canvassed for improved play areas. There is a good focus on promoting basic skills and enterprise activities, which, combined with the pupils' excellent approach to their work, prepares them well for their future education and employment.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The inspection agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Parents and pupils are very positive about the quality of teaching and the range of activities provided. The staff team works exceptionally well together with a calm and purposeful approach. The contribution of the teaching assistants and a classroom manager, are strengths of the provision. The members of staff provide stimulating and enjoyable activities that effectively engage the pupils. Tasks are challenging but not overwhelming and learning is made fun. This is a major achievement because of the wide age range and varied learning needs of pupils in the classes. Assessment procedures are good and the data is used effectively to inform pupils' targets in extensive individual programmes. Exceptional teaching and learning is informed by incisive lesson planning. However, although the remaining teaching and learning are good, there is too little use of the assessment information in the planning of activities and, as a result, pupils' progress, though good, is not outstanding.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and enriched by a good range of interesting activities. Staff ensure that, despite the age range and diverse learning needs of pupils, they have a curriculum that provides a breadth of subjects. However, the post-16 curriculum is limited, with insufficient choices of courses for the students in the locality; the school is working to extend the provision of accredited activities. Basic skills, including communication, literacy and numeracy are taught effectively. The sensory needs of the pupils are met by the creative use of the stimulating range of facilities available in the school. Many opportunities are provided to promote pupils' independence. These opportunities are boosted by valued support from other agencies, such as Connexions and the school nursing service. Some senior pupils use a local café to extend their social skills and opportunities for independent travel are also provided. Additionally, involvement with the Young Enterprise initiative helps to promote a wide range of skills linked to the school's good work-related curriculum. A good proportion of the pupils use mainstream schools for part of their curriculum. Also, mainstream

pupils are regular visitors and help to extend learning and social opportunities. The grounds are attractive and well maintained and provide a stimulating learning environment. The school makes full use of local facilities; for example, access to the neighbouring sports centre extends pupils' physical activities. Pupils enjoy a wide variety of visits in the locality and beyond. They are very keen to attend the after-school clubs that provide an exciting range of indoor and outdoor activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding rather than good as judged by the school. The extremely positive work by staff makes a major contribution to the promotion of pupils' outstanding personal qualities. There is an exceptional level of commitment from staff and, as a result, arrangements for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. The management of health and safety and risk assessments are very effective. The school works exceptionally well with parents. All of the parents returned their questionnaires and their responses were all positive. The school works exceptionally well with other agencies to promote the well-being of these vulnerable pupils. They are provided with exceptional support and guidance in their tutor groups and all pupils are encouraged very effectively to contribute to the school community. Pupils are as fully involved as possible in establishing their personal targets and help to monitor their own progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The inspection agrees with the school that leadership and management are good. Led by an experienced and skilled headteacher, the staff has an exceptional team spirit and a shared sense of purpose. They have a realistic ambition for the provision to become outstanding in the near future. There are clear roles and responsibilities for all staff and the development of the work of the teaching assistants has been a particularly effective initiative. There is performance management of all staff and this leads to effective professional development. Self-evaluation is good and its judgement that the school's overall effectiveness is good is accurate. Development planning is good but the proposed outcomes for school improvement make too little reference to raising pupils' achievement. Day-to-day management is effective and this helps to promote a busy yet calm atmosphere. Progress since the last inspection has been good and, in particular, thanks to a tenacious approach, the school's accommodation has been dramatically improved. The school has an exceptional level of support from the local community and is quite rightly held in the highest regard. The inclusion of learners is at the heart of the school's work and this is made possible by particularly strong relationships with local schools. Governors know the school well and parents are well represented on the governing body. The governors are very involved with the school and provide good levels of support and challenge to the senior leaders. They meet their statutory responsibilities fully.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	NA	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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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To the Pupils of:

The Grove Special School

Grove Gardens

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Berwick-upon-Tweed

Northumberland

TD15 2EN

12 July 2006

Dear Pupils

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. You made me feel very welcome and I particularly enjoyed listening to the views of the school council. You are quite rightly proud of your school and get on exceptionally well together.

This is what I found out about your school.

The staff work exceptionally well as a team and ensure that you have the highest levels of care and lessons that are fun.

You thoroughly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well.

The staff encourage you to be healthy and you enjoy taking part in lots of interesting activities.

You all help to make the school such a happy and busy place.

Your parents and lots of other people all work exceptionally well with the staff and governors to make sure you have an exciting school.

Even though I thought your school was good, I asked your headteacher to make these improvements.

To make sure that teachers use all the information they have available to plan lessons and make them even better.

To ensure that the plan for improving the school is aimed at you making even better progress in your learning.

I hope that you will continue working hard, have fun and help the headteacher and the members of staff make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

David Smith  
Lead inspector