



William Baxter School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124508
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281733
Inspection dates 3 October 2005 to 3 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mick Megee RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Stanley Road
School category	Community special		Hednesford
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		Cannock, Staffordshire WS12 4JS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01543 423714
Number on roll	125	Fax number	01543 423 714
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Anne Tracy

Age group 5 to 16	Inspection dates 3 October 2005 - 3 October 2005	Inspection number 281733
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

William Baxter School is a community special school in Hednesford, Staffordshire. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, although about a third of the pupils have either social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or autism and a few have severe learning difficulties or speech and language problems. The pupils are all from White backgrounds and the number who have free school meals is higher than average. The local education authority (LEA) is reorganising its special schools and from next year the school will provide education for secondary age pupils only, with a wider range of special needs. Until then, no permanent appointments can be made and this has led to recruitment difficulties. A new headteacher was appointed from April 2005. Pupils enter the school with learning difficulties which mean that they achieve below the average nationally, and all have statements of special educational need. There are currently no pupils in the Foundation Stage.

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 views its effectiveness as good. However, the inspectors' view is that the school provides a satisfactory education and satisfactory value for money because the LEA reorganisation, coupled with difficulties in recruiting new staff, including a headteacher, has meant that school development has been restricted. The new headteacher has not been in post long enough for her good plans and intentions to bear fruit, but there is sufficient capacity for the school to improve. All the issues identified in the previous inspection have been successfully resolved, apart from the poor accommodation, which has improved slightly but still remains a barrier to achievement.

Nearly all pupils achieve well and there are strengths in the way that most lessons are organised. A few pupils, those either well above or well below average, do not receive an education which wholly matches what they need to make fast progress. Relationships are very good and behaviour is mostly good. Many pupils receive a good education which meets their needs and prepares them well for later life. There are weaknesses in setting individual targets, the range of courses on offer, the checking on the progress of the different groups within the school, the provision of healthy food, and in the current accommodation. The new headteacher has successfully reassured parents and staff about the future, and kept up morale. Standards of care, leadership and management and teaching are all satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- make certain that every pupil has educational targets and programmes which closely match their individual needs and which will be used by staff to plan their lessons
- check regularly and make certain that no groups are at a disadvantage
- ensure that pupils eat and drink more healthily at lunch and break times
- provide a more suitable range of courses to meet every pupil's needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with learning needs and communication difficulties which have slowed down their progress. Once in the school, most pupils are set demanding appropriate targets in language, number and personal development, and make good progress.

However, inspectors saw quite a few targets which are not specifically tailored to individuals, and this means that the achievement of a significant minority of pupils is satisfactory and not quite as good as it could be. Pupils' progress in subjects is satisfactory. Although inspectors did not find any difference in the progress made by girls and boys, or those of different ages, the school does not monitor achievement in a way which would make certain that no group is at a disadvantage. There are a few pupils with higher ability or with additional special needs who do not achieve as well

as they might because the school does not provide an education programme which is specially adapted for them.

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory, and parents feel the school has a very good influence on their children. Pupils develop a broad range of skills to help them be successful in the workplace. They become increasingly grown-up and self-assured during their time at the school and are generally considerate towards others. Most pupils who have difficulties with behaviour are helped to settle and begin to learn. A few still disrupt lessons, although behaviour in the majority of lessons is good and pupils are keen to learn. Temporary exclusions are still high, although much improved recently. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils are beginning to understand how to live healthy lives and how to eat a variety of food. However, too many still choose high fat or high sugar foods during lunch and break times. Pupils told the inspectors that it would be a good idea if the tuck-shop stopped selling pop and crisps. Pupils know how to keep fit, and all older pupils gain the sports leadership award. Pupils say that they enjoy school although there is some bullying, but they do know who to report to and the incidence is reducing. There is an array of visits and activities sufficient for pupils to develop a reasonable spiritual and cultural understanding. The school does well in encouraging pupils to contribute to the local community with well received visits to a local retirement home, and strong links with a local garden centre. Pupils are prepared well for future employment with regular weekly work experience for all pupils in Year 11 and practical training in running a business in Years 9 and 11.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school judges teaching to be good, but the inspectors' view is that teaching is not always well matched to the needs of each pupil and is satisfactory. This is in line with pupils' achievement. However, there are several strengths in the teaching.

Teachers efficiently manage lessons, get on well with the pupils, and most pupils behave well. Inspectors saw lessons where most pupils are learning well and those who are older are being helped to gain useful qualifications. For a few pupils, however, the lessons are too easy or too hard and do not build well on what they have learned before. Inspectors saw an example of this in a lesson where a pupil with severe learning difficulties was given a worksheet which contained words well beyond the pupil's understanding. Pupils usually understand what they need to do to improve their work.

The planned new system for sharing individual targets with pupils is appropriate and will assist them in making faster progress.

Grade: 3

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The current curriculum has several strengths and a few weaknesses. The wide range of subjects and the broad array of qualifications, especially for pupils aged 14-16, meet the needs of most pupils. Senior managers are working hard to increase their suitability. At present, though, some courses are not sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils to show what they can achieve. This limits their future opportunities, especially with employers. The range and quality of work-related learning is strong and prepares pupils well for the world of work. However, the enrichment opportunities for pupils at lunch times are quite limited, and do not substantially increase the enjoyment of school for the majority. Pupils are taught satisfactorily how to keep safe, but are not yet given enough advice on how to be healthy.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures to keep pupils safe, help them develop important personal skills and reach challenging goals are satisfactory. Pupils and their parents value the school for its secure and nurturing environment.

All staff receive sufficient advice on how to protect pupils and listen to their concerns, especially through the mentoring system. The school checks regularly on each pupil's progress but does not always ensure that lessons build on this information to help pupils do as well as they can.

Some actions have been taken to reduce bullying but even more could be done to bring the subject into the open and help pupils assert themselves. Good advice and training is given to help pupils and their parents make the right career choices. The procedures for helping pupils to manage their behaviour are satisfactory, although the restricted accommodation is a real hindrance in reducing the number of unnecessary exclusions.

Grade: 3

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher is very enthusiastic and full of good ideas, and has made a good start by reassuring parents and staff about the future, and by keeping the school ticking over in this uncertain period. She has taken stock of the situation, brought governors, staff and

parents together to decide the best way to bring about change, and formulated this in an appropriate school development plan which identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school judges itself as good, but the inspectors feel that there are a number of areas which need attention and that, at present, it performs satisfactorily. It is still too early to judge the impact of the headteacher's planning but inspectors consider that there is sufficient capacity to improve.

Some aspects of the management of the school need further attention. The managers do not yet compare the achievement made by different groups of pupils, and there are not yet regular formal checks on the quality of teaching and learning. These would make maintaining and improving the progress of pupils more secure. The poor accommodation continues to restrict the opportunities for pupils to make progress, especially the lack of a calm, private space where pupils can go if they find it difficult to manage their behaviour in lessons. Resources are satisfactory and, together with the accommodation, will be improved enormously under the reorganisation proposals. Satisfactory value for money is achieved.

Governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body and its new supporting committees keep themselves well informed, and give a good deal of personal support to the headteacher and staff. They have yet to develop completely their role in making challenging demands of the senior staff to drive the school forward.

Grade: 3

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

William Baxter School Stanley Road Hednesford Cannock Staffordshire WS12 4JS

4 October 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for helping us to do our job. We really enjoyed seeing your work, and talking to you. You made us feel very much at home. A special thanks to those on the School Council who met with us and who explained so clearly what you think about your school and all the very good things it does.

This is what we found out about your school:

we believe your school enables you to make satisfactory progress in your work

you like your school and you know who to talk to if you have any worries

many of you do well at school because you get the right help when you need it

the new headteacher and the people with responsibility have some good plans to improve the school

some of you do not have targets or courses written especially with you in mind and this may get in the way of you learning really quickly

you often choose food and drinks which are not much good for you

There are two things which the headteacher can do to make the school even better.

the headteacher ought to make absolutely sure that everyone is doing the right course and learns quickly

the school can offer you much healthier lunches and snacks.

Can you try to help the school to put these things right? Perhaps you could try to always choose healthy things to eat.

We hope you agree with us. Thank you again for all your help.

Mick Megee Lead Inspector