



Loxley Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124509
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281734
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Stafford Road
School category	Community special		Uttoxeter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Staffordshire ST14 8RS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01889 256390
Number on roll	64	Fax number	01889 256397
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr M Pearce

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	14 June 2006 - 14 June 2006	281734

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties provides specialist provision for the county of Staffordshire and the adjacent unitary authority of Stoke-on-Trent. Increasingly, pupils are being admitted with additional and complex needs, such as those to do with autism. All have statements of special educational needs and almost all are White British. Some pupils spend up to two hours travelling to the school from distant parts of Staffordshire and an equivalent time travelling home. Residential space is available for up to 40 pupils, but only rarely do more than ten pupils stay at the school. In April 2006 the senior management team was extended by the appointment of two assistant headteachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Loxley Hall is a good school that provides good value for money. This judgement reflects the school's own view of itself, although it has made too little use of the evidence it collects when judging its effectiveness. Strong features include the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the way in which colleges throughout Staffordshire are used, so that pupils are able to study in their own local areas for at least part of their week. The pupils are making good progress for many reasons. The good curriculum is taught well. Their behaviour improves and this allows them to attend better to their work. They gain good advice and guidance. Consequently, they are prepared well to continue their learning, to enter training courses, begin work or to return to mainstream schools. The facilities for teaching food technology continue to be inadequate, but through a number of relevant developments good leadership and management have maintained the good quality of the provision since the last inspection, despite having to meet the more complex needs of many pupils. The capacity for continuing improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 9

The boarding provision makes a good contribution to the learning and personal development of the pupils who board at the school for part of each week. Close communication between care and teaching staff helps the two settings provide substantial support for the work of each other. The last annual report by the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) identified only minor issues for improvement relating to the meeting of the national care standards, which have been attended to. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of the high level of care and support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the information it collects about pupils' progress so that it has a clearer view of how good it is and what needs improving.
- Improve the facilities for teaching food technology.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards pupils attain are broadly in line with those expected for their age. All pupils, irrespective of the cause or severity of their learning difficulties, achieve well against carefully selected targets, especially those for improving their literacy and numeracy skills and their behaviour. Typically, on nationally recognised tests they gain 14 reading months and 18 mathematics months for each year at school. Good progress is made in most of the subjects. Progress in English is improving and is much better than at the time of the previous inspection. In all the subjects, they make better

progress than was the case at their previous schools. The good progress made in physical education leads to improved levels of fitness and results in many pupils developing an enthusiasm for physical activity, as an important aspect of their lifestyles.

The 2005 Year 11 results were marginally lower than the national average for pupils at equivalent special schools. Overall, though, pupils did very well against their learning targets, and well in vocational courses to Level 1 of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in construction, motor mechanics and welding and fabrication. Since the previous inspection, the school has gained an achievement award (2002) and national data shows that for each of the last three years, pupils' progress from Year 6 to Year 11 is within the top 25% for all schools.

Ten of last year's 15 leavers moved into further education, training or gained employment. This is a good outcome that compares favourably with the equivalent statistics for similar schools. Last year, six younger pupils were returned to mainstream schools because of significant improvement in their behaviour and increased maturity. Given the complex needs of many pupils, this represents a good achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils quickly learn to reflect on their actions and, often for the first time, see clear distinctions between right and wrong. Behaviour is good, overall, even though a small number of pupils continue to have difficulty in fully controlling their tempers when provoked. Pupils speak easily of the excellent relationships between the staff and themselves that contribute to them feeling safe while at school and to the enjoyment they gain from working hard to do their best. Most have a good understanding of the importance of living healthy lives and show this by taking regular exercise, eating the right foods and avoiding the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Pupils are prepared well for their future economic well-being. Good improvement in their basic skills helps them do well in their further learning and on courses that prepare them for work. They make a good contribution to the local community through taking part in Easter and Christmas celebrations in the local area and through meeting with leaders of many of the major religions. Boarding pupils gain additional benefits from taking part in the many well-selected activities on offer. One pupil said, 'I love staying here – it's awesome!'

Attendance is good and, for many pupils, far better than was the case at their previous schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Class sizes are small and the teachers and their assistants know their pupils' learning and other needs very well. Pupils like the friendly

relationships they have with staff, who are on hand to help and encourage them. Since the previous inspection a greater number of lessons are taught by teachers with specialist knowledge of the subjects they teach, and more lessons are supported by teaching assistants. In most lessons, the high quality of planning and the good use of teaching assistants ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are met, even in classes with a broad range of abilities. Just a few lessons are less successful because planning is not precise enough and pupils lose interest and sometimes misbehave. The generous size of the classrooms enables teachers to use many strategies to support learning, including those most appropriate for pupils with autism. Pupils benefit from this because they are able to move from one learning base to another and regularly use computers in support of their own learning programmes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad, well balanced and matches well with pupils' learning and additional needs. It has improved since the last inspection. The programme for re-integrating pupils into mainstream schools is better, and those in Years 10 and 11 now gain experiences in colleges local to them, beyond those possible at the school. This outstanding use of colleges throughout Staffordshire has many benefits. The curriculum can be flexibly tailored to fit the specific interests of pupils. It limits the disadvantage for some pupils of spending considerable time travelling to and from school, and allows pupils to gain information on, and more easily pick up on, the training and employment opportunities available in their local areas.

Those in Years 7 to 9 gain their full entitlement to the National Curriculum, although what can be taught in food technology continues to be limited by the inadequate facilities. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain valuable experiences of the world of work and the range of accredited awards that they take in Year 11 is sufficient to demonstrate the extent of their learning over their time at school.

The curriculum is extended well by many additional opportunities including, for example, competitions against other special schools in the region in the main sports and regular visits to local places, such as Lincoln Cathedral and the Black Country Museum to support classroom learning. Last year 12 pupils gained immensely in self-confidence and in the skills of independence when they helped sail a cutter from Newquay, Cornwall to Anglesey as part of the Kids Around Britain Challenge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and the procedures for child protection are robust. Health and safety checks are rigorous and the school responds swiftly to any potential hazards that are identified. Risk assessment for lessons, visits off site, and for individual pupils is done very well.

Pupils feel safe and are eager to say how the staff are quick to give them help and advice. Personal development is tracked carefully and those who find it hard to behave

well gain specific help. One pupil remarked, 'It's brilliant how the staff always have time for you when you feel troubled.' Targets for gain in literacy and numeracy work equally well, but although progress overall is good, in a small number of subjects the targets for learning are not always precise enough to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their capability, make equivalent progress in gaining them. In order to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils, the school has to keep developing its links with an increasingly wide range of other professionals, especially with those from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the clinical psychology service. Connexions personnel throughout the county provide valued guidance on work and training opportunities and on college placements.

Attendance is monitored very effectively and this has helped reduce absenteeism over recent years. Parents are very appreciative of the way staff care for their children. One remarked that 'staff are incredibly supportive, not only of my child at school but also when we have problems at home'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an outstanding role model for staff and pupils alike. He gains the full support of all staff. The newly structured senior management team has made a very good start and is very well placed to ensure that the good development seen since the previous inspection continues. Since that time, effective leadership has increased the number of teaching assistants and gained greater involvement by CAMHS personnel in order to better meet the increasingly complex needs of some pupils. The developing programme for re-integrating pupils into mainstream schools and the innovative use of the colleges in pupils' local areas benefit all pupils.

Management is good. The school is safe, calm, orderly and very well organised. Day to day, the pupils make good progress because they are able to attend fully to their learning and gain considerable benefit from the specific support available to help them deal with their other issues.

Many detailed records are kept on the performance of pupils. Nevertheless, this data and information from other areas of work, for example, on how well pupils with different causes for their difficulties are doing, and how staying at the school benefits pupils, are not being used well enough. This means that the school does not have a clear enough idea of how well it is doing or what needs improving.

Governance is good. All the key issues identified last time have been dealt with, with the exception of the facilities for teaching food technology. This remains an issue which governors need to deal with. The capacity for continued development, as shown by the school's recent progress, is good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	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?	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?	2	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	3	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	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

My colleague, Terry Elston, and I enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for talking with us and for helping us find out about Loxley Hall School. This is what we think.

There are many good things about your school:

- You make good progress in your learning and towards becoming mature young people, so that many of you leave school to continue education or to start work. Being able to study at colleges that are local to you helps in this.
- You like the staff very much and respect them for the quality of the advice and support they give you. You realise that they are making an important contribution to your learning and to your futures.
- You behave well. Most often you are polite to each other and to visitors and know that you are able to control your behaviour better since you started at the school.
- Teaching is good and staff are committed to doing their best for you.
- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and all the staff work hard to ensure that it is a friendly, comfortable and safe place where you are able to fully attend to your learning and deal with your difficulties.

There are two things that we would like to see improved:

- The way the school recognises and analyses how well you are doing, as part of the process of judging how good it is and what needs improving.
- The facilities for teaching food technology, as they are not good enough.