



Maplewood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131915
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 282274
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Emma Ing HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Faulkner Way
School category	Community		Downley
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		High Wycombe HP13 5HB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01494 525728
Number on roll	60	Fax number	01494 441456
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jim Curtis
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr John Rumble

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2 to 19	1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	282274

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Maplewood is a special school providing education for pupils with severe or profound and multiple, learning difficulties. Pupils come from the surrounding urban and suburban communities. Most pupils' backgrounds are white British with about one third of pupils from Asian British families. Many of the Asian British pupils are bilingual where they are beginning to use language. The school opened four years ago in a new purpose built building. It has two off-site units. One of these provides a programme of education for 14-19 year old pupils designed to enable them to make a smooth transition to their adult provision. The second provides a learning environment for pupils who have extremely challenging behaviour or who have specific needs that impinge on their learning and coping in an ordinary special school environment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Maplewood School provides an outstanding education for its pupils, most of whom make exceptional progress. It provides very good value for money. The headteacher and governors are ambitious for the school and this leads them to be rather modest in their evaluation of their achievements. Every child is valued and staff work tirelessly to ensure that their needs are met. At all levels pupils are challenged and extended to make the best progress possible. They are extremely well cared for and are taught how to care for themselves and each other. Teaching is stimulating and carefully matched to individual learners' needs. The school is aware that their use of pupil achievement to track progress effectively should now be further developed to compare progress with pupils in other schools and to track progress of those pupils at a very early stage of development. The curriculum is varied and enriched by visitors and visits to the community. Extra-curricular activities further enhance the experience of pupils across the school. The two off-site units each contribute specialised educational programmes that enable both those with challenging behaviour and older pupils to make excellent progress. As a result of the high quality teaching and care progress made by pupils in the Foundation Stage is excellent. The headteacher is passionate in his commitment to the pupils and leads an able and dedicated staff. Recently, staffing difficulties have led to increased workloads for the headteacher and his leadership team. Governors have taken preliminary steps to address this but it is important that further help is obtained. Nevertheless, the capacity of the school to improve is strong, as evidenced by the recent developments in the 14-19 and behaviour units.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Pupils of sixth form age are taught in an off-site unit for 14-19 year olds. The curriculum is highly effective in meeting their needs. Whilst the subjects of the national curriculum remain central to pupils' learning, they are delivered through courses designed to help them make the transition to college or day centres and to manage the increased independence that adult life will bring them. Very carefully planned teaching, which is well matched to the needs of individual pupils, ensures excellent progress is made as they work towards Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards. Pupils of this age are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves and cope with more freedoms than younger pupils. Pupils make excellent progress in core life skills. Some students prepare lunches for themselves and their peers and all are expected to maintain routines and deal with short periods of free time. Close contact with parents and carers, with the local college and with the transition worker contribute to the smooth transition from school to adult life.

What the school should do to improve further

* The governors and headteacher should continue to devise ways of ensuring that additional staffing is available to reduce the burdens carried by teachers and the

leadership team. * Develop its use of data in order to further refine and improve its provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress at all levels including the Foundation Stage and sixth form. Learners are set appropriately challenging targets which are monitored very effectively and pupil progress is tracked throughout the school. As a result of the learning difficulties experienced by pupils standards are well below the national average. Progress in language and communication skills is excellent throughout the school. Learners make significant strides in developing ways of communicating with their teachers, carers, peers and other people using speech or through signs and symbols. From an early age pupils make excellent progress in developing the ability to express preferences and communicate needs. Through their experiences at school, pupils develop mathematical understanding making good progress in relation to their ability. Their personal development is also extremely good with steady gains being made by most learners in independence, self confidence and inter-personal skills. This is true of pupils at all levels of ability and of pupils of different ages. By the time they leave school they are well prepared for the transition to college and day care and for the different opportunities and experiences of life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils is excellent. Pupils are thriving. They are very happy coming to school and clearly enjoy the experiences it offers. They all confidently participate as fully as they are able throughout the day. Pupils develop a good sense of self and have good esteem, many taking great pleasure in their achievements and the achievements of their peers. Most are able to take turns and relate well both to staff and to each other. Pupils care for each other through simple but thoughtful gestures, such as stroking the hand of a class mate during a stressful moment. They enjoy sport, physical exercise and some are able to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme undertaking walking and camping expeditions in the countryside. Pupils' spiritual development is good. They are able to reflect, contribute to prayers and maintain a shared silence. Similarly, they are aware of a range of cultures and practices, including Japanese drumming which was introduced to them by visitors from a neighbouring special school. Their excellent progress in communication and their developing responsibility enables them to participate in decisions about themselves and the school. In the 14-19 unit, there is an active school council chaired by pupils which manages the delegation of student tasks and considers issues important to them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching at Maplewood is characterised by high expectations and richly stimulating activities. As a result of highly effective teaching, which ensures that the needs of all learners are well met, all learners at all key stages make excellent progress and greatly enjoy their work. They are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Teachers carefully assess their pupils and use this to inform planning. They set challenging targets for their pupils and record progress towards these, but the school is aware that this process could be further refined to enable clarity about the next steps, particularly for those pupils operating at early levels of development. Because teachers know their pupils well and successfully adjust their teaching to meet the needs of individuals, each pupil is challenged to extend their learning appropriately. Teachers are creative in finding new, interesting and active ways to help learners develop skills and understanding. Learning support assistants and volunteers work seamlessly with teachers and are highly effective in reinforcing learning. Those pupils with behavioural difficulties are very closely supported by caring staff who are able to help them focus on the tasks set and skilfully ensure that they are safe. Learning in school is enriched by visitors from outside and by visits that extend pupils' understanding of and interest in our society and environment. There are good opportunities for pupils to experience life and learning in mainstream schools. In the behaviour unit pupils make excellent progress because their individual programmes are underpinned by secure planning assessment and good teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

At all levels the curriculum is extremely well adapted to the needs of the learners. In the Foundation Stage, pupils have considerable opportunities to direct their learning through play and are supported to work towards the Early Learning Goals. From Key Stage 1 onwards the learning of core skills is developed through a varied and stimulating curriculum which incorporates elements of all the national curriculum subjects and allows pupils to experience a wide range of cultures. Throughout the school there is appropriate emphasis on communication skills coupled with good learning in mathematics, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). There is very strong provision for listening to stories and music. Pupils are encouraged to explore different aspects of themselves and their lives in a wide variety of ways and through different subjects. The curriculum is greatly enriched by visitors and visits. The personal social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is well designed to encourage pupils towards a healthy lifestyle and teaches them about their personal safety and welfare. The 14-19 provision is well structured and enables pupils to develop basic skills within a curriculum that is very relevant to their needs and helps them prepare successfully for adult life. Enterprise is developed through activity days and pupils are carefully introduced to the use of money in everyday situations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents recognise that the school provides a safe and immensely caring environment for its pupils, a view which is shared by inspectors. The headteacher and his deputy lead the staff in valuing each individual in the school and actively working to promote his or her well-being. There is a strong sense of community. The school has rigorous procedures to ensure the safety of pupils. Child protection arrangements are securely in place and staff training regularly updated. Considerable emphasis is placed on the health and safety of pupils; they are encouraged to lead healthy lives. The dining room serves healthy food. The school works well with other agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress. Parents and pupils are well informed about targets and the options available to them. Parents comment that communication between the school and themselves is excellent, which inspectors confirm. There are many planned opportunities for pupils to exercise choice and take responsibility for their learning. Transition between stages is well organised. The 14-19 unit provides exceptional opportunities for pupils to learn necessary skills and make the adjustments needed to ensure smooth transition to life after school. The school is calm, because pupils know what is expected of them, reflecting the high quality of social and moral education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership of the school has established a safe and happy environment which supports all learners, promoting excellent progress in personal development and core skills. Two new units have been created this year to meet the needs of pupils. The vision of the headteacher and senior staff, coupled with skilled management, has ensured that both the 14-19 unit and the behaviour unit further support the exceptional progress made by pupils. The headteacher leads the whole school with passion and commitment and is very ably supported by his senior team. The governing body both supports the school and holds the leadership to account providing professional challenge and advice. Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on self-analysis and the views of parents. However their ambition for the school and its pupils leads them to judge their achievements too modestly. Staffing has proved a source of major concern to the school with difficulties as a result of staff illness and recruitment seriously impacting on the workload of those who remain. Nevertheless all staff work as a team and the school is continuing to make significant steps to improve the quality of provision yet further. The headteacher and governors recognise that it is a matter of urgency that additional support is found for the leaders and teachers of the school and have taken preliminary steps to rectify this situation. The school buildings used by the Behaviour Unit present some problems to the school as they do not meet the very specialised needs of the pupils there. There are difficulties too accessing the hydrotherapy pool which is situated some way from the main school site.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
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	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

Melvyn and I very much enjoyed visiting you at school this week. We were very pleased to see your excellent learning and your enjoyment at school. It was a delight to talk to you and hear what you like about school. Thank you for welcoming us and sharing your time with us.

We saw that you are working hard and making very good progress in your learning. We saw that you are happy at school and that you help yourselves and others very well. We saw that you behave well and know what to do in the classroom, in the hall, at lunch and at play. We saw that the people who care for you look after you well and work with others to ensure that your needs are met. We think that you are very lucky to have a school like Maplewood and teachers and assistants who help you. We know that you would want to join us in thanking John and all the teachers and carers who look after you so well. I am sure that they would want to thank you for working so hard while you are with them.

To make your excellent school even better we have asked John to make sure that he has all the help he needs and to study the progress you make even more closely.