



Inscape House School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134064
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 282440
Inspection dates 4–5 October 2006
Reporting inspector Eric Craven HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Schools Hill
School category	Non-maintained special		Cheadle
Age range of pupils	4–16		Cheshire SK8 1JE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2834750
Number on roll (school)	60	Fax number	0161 2834751
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	
		Headteacher	Mr Bill Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

The school is part of a voluntary organisation called the Together Trust and provides for up to 60 pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Each of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The school currently draws from seven local authorities and principally from South and East Manchester. The vast majority of pupils are White British and two are looked-after children. The great majority are boys.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a school providing a good education overall, although there are a few areas needing development. A striking aspect of the school is the expertise of the staff in meeting the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum. Teamwork and training enable staff to give pupils the indispensable predictability they need. The good use of the Picture Exchange Communication System and the uniform way staff deal with challenging behaviour are good examples of this. Integral to the team are the speech and language therapists who provide an excellent service in assessing pupils and helping staff plan and deliver individual programmes. Staff benefit from good communication between home and school and they know the pupils well. The great majority of parents have very positive views about the school and the difference it has made to their children. One parent wrote, 'The teachers and assistants always ensure that each child's specific needs are met and find ways to deal with each child on an individual basis.' Another said, 'The school is instrumental in the improvement in my daughter's ability to learn.' Inspectors agree that the school unlocks pupils' abilities to learn by finding ways to help them communicate.

The quality of teaching is good mainly because of the high quality and effective individual learning programmes; the first-rate work of the speech and language therapists and educational assistants; good relationships between pupils and staff; and consistent classroom management strategies. Because of these strengths pupils make good progress in their personal and social development. Sometimes from a very low base, many learn to communicate and cooperate well. Progress in some subjects is not as striking. The pupils make best academic progress in science because the science curriculum is well planned. Other curriculum subjects are less well mapped out which means that pupils' progression through the curriculum as they move through the school is not as assured. Because of the interesting activities they do and the predictability staff provide most of the pupils enjoy coming to school. Regular trips into the local community are valuable in giving the pupils opportunities to practice social skills and develop their confidence in meaningful ways. Daily exercise at the start of the day, hand washing and the availability of drinks encourage pupils to make efforts to keep healthy. As a consequence of the good relationships pupils feel secure and well supported by staff. Induction arrangements mean that most pupils settle quickly and good work by staff at times of change make sure they are well prepared for the next stages of their education. For example, older pupils undertake work experience which is very appropriate to their individual abilities and levels of dependence. There are good procedures to ensure health and safety.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have developed a good team approach among the staff and this is a significant reason why the pupils are so well cared for and their personal and social development is good. The school has a number of suitable ways of checking on the quality and effectiveness of the things it does. A sensible staffing restructure has taken place to put the school in a better position to address its development needs. The roles of curriculum, transition and assessment managers have wisely been created to match the school's priorities.

However, there are some drawbacks in leadership and management: the use of pupils' progress data as a management tool is in the early stages of development. As a consequence, the school is not yet in a good position to use these data to question the impact of its work. Apart from in science, subject leaders are at an early stage in influencing the development of their subjects across the school, which is another reason why the curriculum is not fully effective. Many pupils are not as involved as they could be in reviews of their own progress or in making contributions to school developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of the subject leader.
- Ensure there is curriculum continuity.
- Management to make better use of pupils' progress data.
- Involve the pupils more in contributing to their learning, individual education plans and annual reviews, wherever possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Appropriate targets are set for each pupil in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development and these are reviewed frequently. However, the pupils interviewed during the inspection were not clear about their personal goals. Pupils make especially good progress in their personal and social development, for example, in dealing with their own anxieties and cooperating with other people. Because of their learning difficulties the standards reached by the great majority of the pupils are well below those expected of pupils of the same age. However, each of the pupils leaving school in 2006 achieved some form of externally recognised accreditation and a few pupils in the recent past have achieved GCSE qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils attend regularly. They and their parents value what the school provides for them. Many are keen to contribute answers in lessons and they are generally enthusiastic in their learning. By and large pupils behave well but when this is not the case staff manage behaviour admirably, aided by good quality behaviour plans. Data on the number of incidents of challenging behaviour shows that this is a decreasing trend. Pupils voice their opinions in the school council and suggest improvements to the school, for example, toilet areas were redecorated and healthier meals provided as a result of their suggestions. Social and moral development is good. Through social stories and discussions many pupils reflect on and appreciate the feelings of others and express their feelings in appropriate ways. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Individual learning plans are a strong feature in lessons and are well monitored to ensure they match the pupils' needs. The work of educational assistants is good in supporting the learning of individual pupils, often anticipating their needs whilst encouraging them to be as independent as possible. Pupils' good progress is a result of the strong focus on language and communication skills in every lesson. The recent introduction of interactive whiteboards in each class has added sparkle to some lessons and has motivated and engaged pupils well. Questions are used effectively to identify how much the pupils have learned. However, opportunities are lost for some pupils to evaluate what they have done and to suggest ways they could improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Individual education plans help make the curriculum pertinent to the pupils. However, the curriculum across the school is not well mapped out which inhibits the school's ability to ensure pupils receive a coherent and progressive education as they move from key stage to key stage. There is also inconsistency in the format and detail of teachers' planning. However, the new curriculum coordinator has completed an audit and has devised a plan to rectify these deficiencies. Work with the older pupils is increasingly geared to the development of their independence and tailored to their next educational steps: the vast majority of pupils move on to further education. Each year older pupils undertake valuable residential experiences and they say how much they enjoy these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. In addition to the care they give their pupils, staff are ready and willing to offer support to parents to help them meet their children's needs. Good links exist with outside agencies to give a range of help and advice to pupils and parents. For example, a sleep clinic provided parents with much valued guidance and support. Health and safety procedures are robust and pupils feel well cared for and secure. They benefit from high levels of staff supervision and risk assessments, which are a well embedded feature of the school's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are well supported by senior staff from the Together Trust and by the recently reconstituted governing body, who are also

beginning to provide appropriate challenge for the school's leadership. The addition of governors experienced in special needs education has been beneficial and has put the governing body in a good position to fulfil its role. The school gathers the views of staff and parents to help it evaluate its effectiveness. The school improvement plan is a well constructed document with a series of relevant priorities. However, it is yet to be supplemented by action plans for each of the subjects taught. Because of the effective self-review systems and increasing use of whole-school data the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making Mr Torr and myself so welcome when we came to see how well you were getting on. We were delighted to be able to meet with the school council. Thank you for sharing your views with us.

We think yours is a good school. The training the staff undertake helps them to understand your needs well. Things like the Velcro timetables clearly help those of you who use them know what you will be doing and when. We thought you were learning well in lessons and the individual education plans you have really do set some clear targets for your progress. We liked the interactive whiteboards in classes and think these make learning even more interesting. The behaviour we saw was generally good. When a pupil did have a behaviour problem we were impressed with the way staff handled this. They helped the young person who was angry or upset while allowing the lesson for the rest of you to continue smoothly. We also very much liked the way the staff worked together as a team, sometimes one member of staff working with a group while others were working with individual pupils: each member of the staff team in a class knew what they had to do.

There are a few things that will help the school get even better. We have asked Mr Taylor and the staff to make clearer plans for the subjects you learn so staff will know exactly what they have to teach in those subjects and when. We think the teachers who are responsible for each of those subjects have a bigger part to play in helping with this as well. We would also like the school to make more use of the information it has about the progress you are making. Finally, we think that some of you could be more involved when your individual plans are put together so that you too know more about your targets.

Thank you again, we wish you well for the future and do keep up the good work.