



Hob Moor Oaks School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134728
Local Authority York
Inspection number 282665
Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Kath Halifax

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Green Lane
School category	Community special		Acomb
Age range of pupils	3–11		York YO24 4PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01904 555000
Number on roll (school)	66	Fax number	01904 550031
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Barry Bishop
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan Williams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006	Inspection number 282665
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2004 following the local authority review of special education. It is an amalgamation of four former schools. It operated on a number of sites until April 2006, when the new building was complete. The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school, a private nursery and other children's services. The majority of pupils have severe or profound learning difficulties. At over one third, the proportion of pupils with autism is increasing. A few pupils have moderate learning needs. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of pupils of this age. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are looked after children or from travelling families. Since the re-organisation, there has been a high staff turnover.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but improving school that provides satisfactory value for money. Since amalgamation, it has gone through considerable upheaval. Initially, when the school was on three sites, the accommodation was inadequate and its progress was slow. During this time, the newly appointed headteacher had to work extremely hard to gain the confidence of all involved in the work of the school. Since the move to a permanent base, the rate of progress has improved considerably and is now good. There is good capacity to continue to improve at the same rate, although the school's own view is more cautious.

Staff and pupils are already reaping the benefits of the school's location and new accommodation. Though academic links are informal, pupils' social development profits considerably from being alongside pupils in the mainstream primary school. In addition, daily access to a range of medical therapists, and before and after school clubs, contributes well to pupils' well-being. Staff from the mainstream school report they are increasing their skills, especially when working with pupils who learn more slowly, because of the close links with Hob Moor Oaks. The formal links providing support for pupils from other York primary schools are good and contribute well to the achievement of these pupils.

Standards are well below average because of pupils' learning difficulties. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory, as are teaching, learning and the curriculum. Young children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because of the good provision and shared activities with the mainstream Reception classes. The school underestimates the effectiveness of the arrangements for these children, judging them to be simply satisfactory. In Key Stages 1 and 2, there are differences in the achievement of pupils of different capabilities. Though they move forward in small steps, the rate of progress for pupils with severe and profound difficulties is improving. Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they should because they are not sufficiently stretched. The achievement of pupils with communication difficulties is affected adversely by the lack of a coherent programme to meet their needs.

Teachers and support staff have had to become familiar with how pupils of differing needs learn. Their expertise is now improving, as a result of new appointments and staff training, but there is still a way to go. Where teachers are experienced, teaching is good, but overall the quality of teaching is inconsistent and this is reflected in pupils' learning.

Pupils enjoy school. They are well behaved and make good gains in their personal development because of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Joint activities with 'partner' mainstream classes, for example, in music and wheelchair dancing, increase pupils' confidence, independence and maturity. Pupils are helped to adopt safe practices and are encouraged to consider a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is good. Most absences are through ill health. Pupils receive satisfactory care, support and guidance. Parents have mixed views of the school. Most are pleased with the new arrangements, but a few do not have full confidence in the

leadership. The governing body and local authority are currently dealing with their concerns.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. That of the senior team is good and is moving the school forward. Tough decisions and resistance from staff and parents have had to be dealt with, but after a long, hard journey, most now say they feel valued and pleased with how things are progressing. The leadership team know what the school does well and where action is needed. Good systems are in place to take the school forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the range of methods used to enable pupils with communication difficulties to make better progress.
- Provide work that stretches higher attaining pupils.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Good assessment systems now provide a clear picture of pupils' achievements. Achievement overall is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage it is good, especially in personal and social development, and in communication and language. Following a whole-school focus on developing the provision for those with severe and profound difficulties, these pupils are now making better progress and achieving well. While not unsatisfactory, the achievement of higher attaining pupils could be better. This is because some of the activities provided do not make them think and reason. Equally, opportunities are missed to reinforce targets in individual education plans. Some higher attaining pupils attend schools in their home area for one session a week, but these links have limited academic purpose. With the move to the new site, plans are being made to accommodate other higher attaining pupils in the mainstream primary school, in order to boost their learning. The pupils with communication needs, who use a picture exchange system (PECs) to make their needs known, achieve well. However, others with communication difficulties do not do as well because there is not enough emphasis on other forms of communication.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well behaved and enjoy school. They have coped exceptionally well with the move to new premises because of careful preparation, such as the compilation of 'On the Move' books. They say they especially enjoy taking lunch and playing with new friends from the mainstream primary school. Through good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils have an awareness of diversity. Attractive displays produced jointly with the mainstream primary school, for instance, of 'Peace One Day', give pupils a sense of pride and community. Pupils are gaining an

awareness of other cultures through links with schools in India. They have a growing understanding of the need to keep safe and healthy, reminding staff that they have to clean their teeth after lunch.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is improving, but there is still too much that is mediocre. Teachers now plan to a common format and aim to provide different tasks for pupils of differing needs. Where teachers are confident and knowledgeable, this works well, but too often the work for higher attaining pupils lacks challenge. Similarly, where teachers are familiar with how pupils of differing needs learn, then progress is good but again this is not always the case. This is especially so in providing for pupils with communication needs. Some teachers confidently use PECs, so pupils make good progress. The use of signing to support the spoken word is patchy, as is the use of symbols. Currently, two commercial symbols packages are used and this is confusing for both adults and pupils. Teachers have built up an accurate picture of pupils' achievements through a good range of assessment procedures. These are now being used to focus on gaps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's leaders recognised that in the past the curriculum did not meet the needs of many of the pupils and have made various changes. Subjects other than numeracy and literacy are being taught under topic headings. This has been carefully planned and checked against National Curriculum requirements, but it is too soon to judge the impact of the initiative. The curriculum for pupils with more severe and complex needs is being developed and is already contributing to their improved progress. The new building and high quality resources have opened up numerous learning opportunities. Every pupil now works alongside pupils from the primary school. Though for many this is informal, these links are already making a considerable contribution to the pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Following the move to the new accommodation, a health and safety check was undertaken and most of the identified faults have now been remedied. The way pupils are moved and handled has been reviewed recently and high quality care plans are now in place. Child protection procedures have been made known to all staff. Pupils with medical needs are provided for well. Links with therapy support agencies have improved considerably, as a result of being together on the same site.

Links with parents and carers are variable. Most have come to terms with the move to the new building and are appreciative of the opportunities that have opened up for their children. Despite numerous initiatives introduced by the leadership team, some parents are finding it difficult to cope with their child being part of a much larger school and with new staff. The inspector received letters of concern that have been passed to the responsible safeguarding officer. The governors and local authority are also looking into these concerns.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team were all new appointments when the school opened. They acknowledge it has taken a while to 'get things right'. They have faced sizeable challenges as well as coping with constant change. Nevertheless, following consultation with staff, parents and pupils, they have secured a high quality building and resources. Staff and pupils are now familiar with routines and systems so school improvement is accelerating. All acknowledge there is much to be done, particularly in subject management. Even so, staff are rising to the high expectations of the leadership team. Good checks on classroom practice have already led to significant improvements. A detailed analysis of pupils' achievements has focused on what needs to be done and made target-setting more realistic.

Many of the governors are new, but are keen to become more involved in the work of the school. Anxious to bring parents on board, the governors have encouraged each of the parent representatives to link with a particular class. This is reported to be working well. Alongside the headteacher, they have made some good appointments that are aiding improvement. This is especially so for pupils with profound and sensory difficulties. Under the visionary leadership of the headteacher, the school is beginning to settle and is looking to the future with anticipation and enthusiasm.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
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	2
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?	3
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?	3

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

I know some of you find reading difficult, so I have asked your headteacher to read this to you. I enjoyed visiting your school. I think you are very lucky to be the first pupils in such a super building. Thank you for helping me with my work and talking to me. I was impressed by how polite and thoughtful you are.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education and some things are especially pleasing. Here are the main ones.

- Since you have all come together in the new building things are moving forward quickly.
- You enjoy school; your behaviour and attendance are good.
- You are already making friends with the children from the other primary school and do really well when you work with your partner classes, for instance, in wheelchair dancing and music.
- Those of you who have medical needs receive good support.
- Your headteacher and managers know exactly what needs to be done to make your school even more successful.

Here are the things I have asked your teachers to do to help your school become better.

- Make sure all lessons are equally good so you make better progress.
- Your teachers have made a good start to planning different work for different children, but the work for those of you who learn more quickly sometimes needs to be more difficult to make you think more deeply.
- Some of you use PECs very successfully but more needs to be done using signs and symbols to help those of you who have communication needs.

I enjoyed my short time with you and wish you well for the future.