



Lexden Springs School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115475
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 284329
Inspection dates 27 March 2006 to 28 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Carmen Rodney LI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special	School address	Halstead Road
School category	Community		CO3 9AB
Age range of pupils	3 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206 563321
Number on roll	64	Fax number	01206 570758
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev.Christine Shillaker
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Jacky Wood

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

Description of the school

Lexden Springs School provides full-time education for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Additionally, there are a few pupils with either multi-sensory impairment or autism. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds but approximately 5% are of minority ethnic heritage; three have a mother tongue other than English. One third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. When the school was inspected in June 2004, it was judged to require special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Lexden Springs School is a satisfactory school with some good features. The school has been transformed since the last inspection; it has made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and provides satisfactory value for money. The school is well led and managed. Consequently, there is clear direction for its future development and its capacity to improve is good. The school is increasingly more self-evaluative and recognises the steps it must take to sustain the improvements already made. However, monitoring and evaluation skills are still being developed. The quality of planning and teaching is now good and curriculum planning is more reflective of the pupils' needs and the planned move towards the New Model Special School (NMSS). Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their work with good progress in their personal development and information and communication technology skills (ICT). The school's monitoring of the pupils' progress has improved but assessment information is not used fully. Although the Foundation Stage is very small, the provision is good. The structured learning environment in the classroom contributes to accelerating the children's development. An inclusive approach permeates the work of the school. Its mantra - 'teaching, learning and caring' - underpins the day-to-day life of the school. All pupils, irrespective of their ability or disability are included in every activity undertaken in school or as part of the wider curriculum in the local community and beyond. The quality of care is exceptionally good and parents are very supportive of the school. They know that their children are happy and well cared for in a safe and secure environment which allows them to thrive. External links and partnership work with schools and consultants have had a positive impact on the school's progress.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth-form provision is satisfactory with notable good features. The students' achievement is satisfactory overall. They attain accreditation in a suitable range of carefully selected courses because of the good quality teaching, support and attention given to matching courses to their needs. They derive many benefits from pursuing the vocational courses and attending the college, which they enjoy because they can 'meet different people, do different courses and behave like adults'. Their personal development is a strength. They are given opportunities to take on responsibilities, and independent learning and living skills are well promoted through the transition challenge programme. Plans are underway to create a post-16 centre for the area and improve the facilities as well as the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- assessment data is used analytically and consistently to inform planning and identify the progress in pupils' learning - procedures for monitoring are established and used

critically by the governors and middle and senior teams to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All of the pupils have statements of special educational need and, as a result, standards of attainment cannot be measured against the national averages because of their extensive learning difficulties. Despite their profound difficulties, pupils of all ages and abilities make satisfactory progress overall. The school has started to use assessment data more rigorously to track the pupils' progress and ensure that they are not underachieving. The information yielded shows that all pupils make small but meaningful steps towards reaching their targets. They are set challenging targets in literacy, numeracy and in their personal and social development. Achievement by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory, with most of the pupils surpassing expectations. The school is rightly seeking alternative accreditation for the more able pupils in Years 10 and 11. Students in the sixth form achieve well. In the school's first set of results for the entry level qualifications offered by ASDAN (a nationally recognised awarding body), four students gained the bronze award. All pupils and students achieve best in ICT and in their personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave very well and relationships with others are good. They enjoy the individual attention given to them by the staff and respond appropriately. The cheerful school ethos, collaborative work and relationships between staff and pupils impact positively on all aspects of their personal development. As they move through the school, most show good improvement in self-help and independence skills. Responsibilities, regardless of requirements are handled well. For example, sixth-form students are involved well in the school community and gain in confidence as they help younger pupils with their learning. The older pupils learn how to look after themselves and are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles in personal, social and health education, physical education and some enrichment activities. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good with exceptional features in their spiritual and social development. Their progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT helps to prepare them for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching has improved and is good, overall. This improvement has had a positive impact on the progress pupils make in lessons because the quality of planning

is closely matched to their needs. Learning objectives are clear and reflect the pupils' learning or disabilities; activities are varied and meaningful, with many practical tasks and games to stimulate the pupils. The teachers know their pupils very well and use their specialist knowledge expertly to help pupils make progress. They use a wide range of strategies effectively, including, visual resources, communication aides, signing, musical instruments and music, games and role-play, to engage the pupils and help them understand basic concepts. A very practical approach is adopted to ensure that the pupils make satisfactory and often good progress. ICT is used well to enhance learning, particularly for pupils with the most complex learning needs. The teaching assistants support pupils very well and understand their needs. The staff maintain good records of pupils' progress to capture their achievements in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum planning and organisation have improved since the last inspection. The school is continuing to review and develop the curriculum to ensure that it matches the pupils' needs and reflect other cultural heritages. The curriculum has been broadened in Key Stage 4 and post-16 to include a range of accredited vocational courses and opportunities for work related learning through 'Work Right'. There is more flexibility and provision in the post-16 curriculum through the good links with the local college. Planned opportunities for pupils with complex learning needs and the more able have improved. Further work is planned to reflect the emerging NMSS curriculum model. At all stages, there is good attention to basic skills, in particular, communicating, listening, numeracy and ICT. Circle time and personal, social and health education are used effectively to develop basic skills. There is a good range of enrichment activities to take the pupils into the community and involve them in both school and community activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of care provided for the pupils is good with some excellent features. Staff are totally committed to the well-being of the pupils; they ensure that the learning environment is welcoming and stimulating for them. Parents recognise that the school provides a very caring, safe and secure environment. Procedures for risk assessment and health and safety issues such as handling pupils are rigorous as are the measures for child protection. All staff receive appropriate training that is matched to the needs of the pupils. The pupils are encouraged to pursue a healthy life style through the keep fit and healthy eating programmes. The well-co-ordinated Movement Opportunities via Education (MOVE) programme has given the pupils with a physical disability more flexibility and independence. The appointment of key workers, beginning in the Foundation Stage is ensuring closer partnership work between the school and home. Transitional work is well planned as is the emphasis on recognising and using money. Post-16 students enjoy the challenge of basic marketing through the

mini-enterprise projects. Systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress have improved. Data analysis is being used more analytically and there is an increasing awareness of its use to drive improvement but the quality is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher, appointed in September 2005, has injected a new impetus towards improving the quality of provision. She has strengthened the foundations, previously started by her predecessor, for the school's further improvement. The headteacher is passionate about the quality of teaching, learning and caring (TLC) provided for the pupils; this has become the mantra for the school. Within a short time she has transferred the momentum for school improvement to all staff. Strategic plans for the future development of the school have been shared and the headteacher has elicited the full support of the senior and middle managers. A cohesive team has been created and there is an increasing understanding of school processes because leadership has clearly articulated the next steps needed for further improvements. The school's self - evaluation of its work is accurate. Teaching and learning are reviewed regularly and the school is better placed to evaluate critically the quality of work and set targets. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation are, however, not yet fully embedded. For example, middle and senior managers are still developing their monitoring and evaluative skills, and, although assessment data is used, analysis of the information is at an early stage. Wider professional development is now linked to individual needs and the school's provision. Decisive action on staffing and budget management has safeguarded improvements in teaching and resources to enhance learning. Additionally, the quality of partnership work with external agencies is good. The governors are better informed and know the school but there is still more work to do on the processes used to challenge the school. Appropriate action is taken to consult parents and the school is aware of the need to involve them more in activities.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	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	1	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

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	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, through quality assurance and self-review	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 are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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	NA
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

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed meeting all of you and there is a special thanks to those who showed me their work and talked to me about why the school means so much to them. The school takes very good care of you and I agree with you and your parents that this is a very special school that always make sure that you are safe and can enjoy your learning. You are all learning quite well now and really enjoy taking part in assemblies and using the computer. The teachers know how to help you enjoy your work because they use a lot of interesting and practical work to make learning interesting. They give you opportunities to go on visits and take part in different clubs. Those of you in post-16 said that you enjoy going to college as it also helps you to grow up. You are proud that you manage the mini-enterprises and are given responsibility in school and work experience. The new headteacher, all of the staff and the governors have been working very hard to make your school the best place to learn to do things for yourself. They want you to do well and become independent. I have asked them to keep a close eye on how well you are doing and to make thorough checks on everything it does for you in case there is anything it might do better to help you succeed. I hope that you will continue to enjoy your time at the school as it supports and challenges you on your journey to greater independence and responsibility.