



Longwill School for the Deaf

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103603
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286701
Inspection date 10 January 2007
Reporting inspector Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bell Hill
School category	Community		Northfield
Age range of pupils	2-12		Birmingham B31 1LD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4753923
Number on roll (school)	43	Fax number	0121 4766362
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Robin Caley
		Headteacher	Babs Day
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school that caters for pupils with severe and profound hearing loss. Because of the nature of pupils' special needs, attainment on entry is well below average. All pupils have statements of special education need and several have additional special needs, including autism and behavioural difficulties.

Pupils come from the local area of Birmingham. Many are from socially deprived areas. Over half are eligible for free school meals and nearly three quarters of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of pupils have British Sign language (BSL) as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Longwill provides an outstanding education for its pupils. This is because, through the excellent leadership of the headteacher and her deputy, the needs of each pupil are placed at the heart of the school. Excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage class enables children to make an exceptional beginning to their education. This rate of progress is maintained throughout the school so that by the end of Year 6, although standards remain generally below average, pupils' achievements are excellent, particularly in their communication skills. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciate the many ways they are supported in dealing with their deaf child. One commented on knowing it was 'the best school from the moment we walked in'.

There is a very good range of systems for checking the progress of each pupil as they move through the school. Staff use this information to set challenging targets for each child. Pupils know what they need to do to improve, and work hard to achieve the goals set for them with the support of outstanding teaching. As a result all pupils, regardless of their special needs, make outstanding progress in their learning. They also benefit from an excellent curriculum which provides them with an exceptional range of activities. It supports their communication skills extremely well and pupils are helped by the high level of signing throughout the school. As a result, they develop into confident communicators who are well prepared for the next stage of their education – as one parent said, 'the school opens up doorways for your child'. Through excellent links with parents, pupils are further supported in their communication skills because the school provides signing classes at home for families.

There is meticulous planning for the care, support and guidance of pupils which ensures all pupils are safe and well cared for. Because of these excellent systems pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. There is an extremely good focus on encouraging pupils to take on responsibility, and the school council plays an important role in developing the school. Prefects take their responsibilities very seriously and ensure that pupils behave, particularly at lunch time. Pupils talk positively about school and this is reflected in their clear enjoyment in lessons and keenness to attend school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. This is a school that knows itself very well and has a good understanding of what its strengths are. It has, though, been too modest in its assessment of its effectiveness, which it judged to be good rather than outstanding. The considerable data on pupils' achievements is used very well to support pupils' individual progress and to make sure every pupil makes the best possible progress. However, the school does not yet routinely check the overall progress of all the different groups, such as those from ethnic minorities, in order to analyse whether they all make similar high rates of progress. Nor does it incorporate its analysis into its development planning to enable governors and staff to check how well the school is doing in meetings its targets.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that development planning reflects the school's analysis of all pupils' achievements so that staff and governors have a clear picture of how achievement can be improved even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

As soon as they start school, pupils begin to develop their skills in communication. Many, when they arrive, have very limited skills, but, as their signing improves, so does their confidence. As their vocabulary extends, their learning moves at an increasingly fast rate and this is reflected in the success pupils have in reaching their targets. This is the case for all pupils, regardless of their special needs. Although, because of their special educational needs, standards are below average, several are assessed in their standards assessment tests (SATS) in Year 6 as reaching almost average levels in maths and science. This reflects exceptional progress from their low starting points. Pupils' written skills are very good and they show a good understanding of sentence structure and the use of a varied vocabulary. The range of skills pupils develop supports them very well in preparing them to meet the challenges that they will encounter as they grow older.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy school and the range of activities they can do. They say they feel safe and make a point of supporting those younger than themselves. This is very evident around the school and opportunities, such as peer mentoring, are greatly valued by the pupils. They feel that their ideas are listened to and that they can make a contribution to school life. The school council has been particularly effective in ensuring that pupils' ideas are listened to and acted upon. For example, a survey by the school council resulted in the instigation of a breakfast club. Pupils are very aware of the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit.

From an early age, pupils develop self-confidence and take increasing responsibility for their own and others' well-being. They respond very well to these opportunities – prefects carry out their role very seriously and are not afraid to tell others off if they feel they are not behaving well enough. Behaviour is excellent and the overwhelming majority of pupils feel confident that bullying is dealt with firmly. Strategies to check on behaviour and ensure that those with behaviour difficulties are supported have had a positive impact on behaviour within school. Pupils are highly motivated and value the celebration of their successes. Cultural diversity is celebrated and pupils show a very good understanding of different cultures. They support those less well off than themselves, for example, through their regular contact with a school in India.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' special needs and the high level of support from staff ensure that pupils have outstanding opportunities to improve their communication skills. Teachers' planning is very detailed and they clearly know their pupils well. As a result, activities are organised to enable each pupil to make the best possible progress. This was very evident in a lesson in which a group of pupils were working on the value of money. A pupil with autistic spectrum disorders carried out a similar activity but with a support assistant who used carefully selected resources very well to support his learning. The huge range of activities that teachers provide to make lessons interesting and enjoyable is reflected in the excellent displays around the school. Corridors and classrooms are a learning experience of their own, with interactive and tactile displays everywhere to stimulate pupils. Through good marking of work, teachers provide pupils with ways of improving what they have done as well as praising their efforts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is well organised, relevant and therefore highly motivating. The strong emphasis upon the development of BSL as a language for learning underpins the work of the school and enables pupils to effectively access an excellent range of experiences. Activities are diverse and planned to give all pupils, including those with additional needs, as broad a range of experiences as possible. As a result, for example, pupils learn about a different language each year, including Japanese and Danish.

The programme for personal, social and health education is very good and ensures that there are many opportunities to promote pupils' self-confidence. These are well planned, effective and greatly influence pupils' capacity to make progress. For example, the peer mentoring programme enables older pupils to support younger ones in their reading development. There is an extensive range of visits to local community and arts events, within both the deaf and hearing communities, which further supports pupils' learning experiences. Opportunities to link with other schools, both directly and through video conferencing, engage pupils well in the wider world, although the school has plans to develop this even further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Considerable importance is placed on ensuring pupils are kept safe. Child protection procedures, including those concerned with recruitment, are very good, and health and safety issues are dealt with effectively. The school works very well with parents and other agencies to make sure that pupils and their families are well supported and this is much appreciated by parents. The introduction of learning mentors and the

peer mentoring system has had a positive impact upon pupils' own target setting. As a result pupils have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve further. The school is in the process of extending its systems to enable it to have an even better understanding of the progress pupils make in these areas. Support and guidance for pupils to look ahead towards the world of work is very effective. It starts in the Foundation Stage with relevant topic work and develops so that older pupils are able to communicate confidently about their aims and hopes for the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The excellent teamwork between the headteacher and deputy headteacher has ensured that the school has made tremendous gains since they started working together two years ago. They have established very effective systems for checking pupils' progress that enable staff to have a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of provision and of the progress of each pupil. This in turn ensures a sharp focus on maximising each pupil's potential, leading to outstanding achievement. They have been very effective in empowering staff to become more involved as leaders and managers. As a result leadership and management are very strong at all levels. The school is keen to do the very best for its pupils and its involvement in a variety of initiatives supports this very well. Links to other schools and groups within the community ensure that pupils have an excellent range of experiences.

The process for self-evaluation is well established and the school has a very good understanding of what it needs to do to improve, although this is not well reflected in the school development plan. Whilst there has been very good work on individual pupils' progress, this has not yet been extended to assessing and analysing whole-school targets and looking at the progress of different groups within the school. The drive and commitment of the senior management team, together with staff and governors, ensure that the school has made extremely good progress since the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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 very much for your time in talking to us and in showing us your work. We very much enjoyed seeing your school and were very impressed by your signing skills.

Your school gives you an excellent education and makes sure that you make the best possible progress. Because of this, your achievements and personal development are outstanding and you are extremely well prepared for life outside school.

The wonderful displays around the school show that you have a very wide range of experiences and show how interesting your lessons are. Teachers know you very well, and planning for what you will learn is excellent. You benefit from excellent teaching and the signing by staff is of a very high quality.

Anne and I were very impressed by the sensible way you took on responsibilities such as being school council representatives and prefects, and how you look after each other so well. There are excellent systems in school that make sure you are safe and that you are very well supported in your learning and personal development.

The headteacher and her deputy work extremely well together and have ensured that everyone knows what the school is good at and what it could do better. They have made sure there are very good systems for checking how well you are doing. At the moment, though, there is no whole-school approach to checking how well all the different groups in school are doing and using this to help develop the school further.

We have asked your school to do one thing to make things even better and that is to look at everyone's achievements together and see what areas could be improved further.

We wish you all the best for the future.