



# Redbridge High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104749  
**Local Authority** Liverpool  
**Inspection number** 287021  
**Inspection date** 9 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Cladingbowl HMI

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

|                                           |                    |                         |                       |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Special            | <b>School address</b>   | Sherwoods Lane        |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community special  |                         | Fazakerley, Liverpool |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–19              |                         | Merseyside L10 1LW    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 0151 5255733          |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 46                 | <b>Fax number</b>       | 0151 5240435          |
| <b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>          | 40                 |                         |                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Mr Eddie Smith        |
|                                           |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mr Paul Cronin        |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 13 January 2003    |                         |                       |

|                  |                        |                          |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b> | <b>Inspection date</b> | <b>Inspection number</b> |
| 11–19            | 9 January 2007         | 287021                   |

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This average-sized special school caters for pupils and students between the ages of 11 to 19 who have severe learning difficulties (SLD) and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). 23.04% also have emotional or behavioural difficulties and 25% have other additional needs related to autistic spectrum disorders. A very small number of pupils have degenerative illnesses. Around half of the pupils and students are entitled to free school meals, which is a very high proportion. Twenty seven per cent of pupils and students are looked after, with 14% in public care because of complex needs and challenging behaviour and with a further 13% in receipt of respite care. Twelve per cent are from minority ethnic groups, which is representative of the region as a whole. One pupil has a home language other than English. Educational attainment on entry to the school is very low with very few pupils working towards or at National Curriculum levels. Most pupils and students attending the school come from across the City of Liverpool but a small proportion come from outside the local Authority. The school is part of a network of other Merseyside schools catering for pupils and students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). It is also part of a local 14 to 19 collaborative with other high schools. The school has Investors in People status, the Silver Sports Mark Award, Arts Mark Award and the Basic Skills Award. It won a national Healthy Schools award last term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding, very successful and happy school. It has high aspirations and is rightly very ambitious for its pupils and students. Highly effective leadership and a collective vision for the school underpin the school's unwavering commitment to effective teaching. It is this, above all else, that helps pupils and students make the progress of which they are capable, even though many face very considerable challenges. This is supported by an ethos where everyone matters and where self-confidence and enjoyment are painstakingly promoted in routine and regular day-to-day activities. Teachers, and others in the school, talk with passion and pride as they describe their work and its importance, citing example after example of where pupils and students have achieved beyond the expected. Where teaching is less strong, or where specialist teaching skills could improve further, school leaders provide a good range of support and challenge. The accommodation is limited as some rooms lack storage space for vital equipment and because the lay-out of the building makes access and mobility a little difficult. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, the available accommodation is used well and the school provides a positive environment for learning.

A central feature of the school's approach to teaching and learning is the recognition that effective communication is the key to the excellent and integrated learning experiences provided by the school. The pupils and students understand what is required of them. The outstanding curriculum blends physical, emotional, social and other learning activities into a coherent whole that meets the needs of each individual. In addition, many of the pupils and students, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, benefit exceptionally well from the consistent use of clearly organised and implemented behaviour management strategies.

Rightly, the school is regarded highly by other key agencies and works effectively with others to promote and provide services that focus on the needs of each pupil. Despite this, some lack of access to specialist services, for example occupational health and speech and language therapists, means that therapy is not as frequent and that progress for some pupils is a little slower than it might be. The school provides outstanding value for money. The skill and commitment of leaders, managers and staff mean that there is good capacity to improve further despite limitations in some resources.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

All of the students in the sixth form make good or better progress, where their physical health allows. Careful analysis of each student's requirements, and a particular focus on preparing students for life after school, ensures that they not only gain some externally accredited qualifications but that they progress to suitably challenging education, training or other settings after they leave school. Efforts to support students' independent travel skills have been renewed recently. Recent changes to the way that the students are supported in leaving school are helping ensure that they are prepared

for this sooner. Students, rightly, talk very positively about the sixth form. It is an important and successful part of their personal development and education.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the accommodation so that it meets the needs of all pupils better.
- Ensure that all pupils have good access to specialist services.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils and students make outstanding progress overall. All are set challenging goals for personal and social development, literacy and numeracy. Annual targets are set in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Formal assessment is carried out annually and shows that most pupils and students make discernibly good or better progress throughout their time in school. In 2005/06, for example, pupils and students met over 75% of the challenging targets in individual education plans. Pupils with SLD are performing well against the available national figures and pupils and students with PMLD make good progress, as measured through a 'small steps' curriculum. Pupils and students with other complex needs, including medical needs, make suitable progress through a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to their education. The most able pupils make very good progress in reading following the introduction of a whole school policy on reading, the provision of additional in-service training for teachers and additional learning mentor support in classrooms.

Overall, pupils and students make exemplary progress in improving their communication and independent living skills, as do pupils with autism who make notable progress in the way that they interact and work with others. All pupils and students progress exceptionally well in music and physical education, largely because of specialist provision and excellent teaching.

The large number of pupils and students who are in public care perform as well as their peers, as do pupils and students from minority ethnic groups.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Considerable emphasis is placed on helping pupils and students to lead healthy lifestyles even though some find this difficult. Frequent and regular physical activity, including morning and lunch-time runs for some and enthusiastic discussion about food choices, highlight the importance of being healthy. Health, including weight, is monitored by health professionals and discussed with pupils, students and parents as part of routine

medical support.

Relationships at the school are very good: all are treated with respect and dignity.

Pupils

and students enjoy coming to school and the school council was asked what they liked about school, one answered by saying, 'all of it'. Consistently implemented systems for

managing behaviour and effective communication strategies help ensure good day-to-day behaviour, contributing to a safe environment throughout school. Pupils and

students work well with and encourage each other, often showing good insight into the

needs of others. Bullying is rare but it is taken very seriously if occurs. Pupils and students feel safe and they know who to approach if they have any problems.

A recent questionnaire confirmed that nearly all parents/carers believed that pupils and

students do well at, and enjoy coming to, school, as did the questionnaires provided to

parents and carers as part of the inspection. Parents and carers were full of praise for their child's personal development. One parent wrote about her son that, 'the school is

his life' and another wanted to thank the school for, 'getting my son back' after an unhappier educational experience elsewhere.

The school council is taken very seriously, and takes itself seriously, and helps pupils and students to develop responsibility. They express views confidently and know they will be heard. The school council organises fund-raising for charitable causes and this promotes respect for others and some understanding of other cultures. Joint activities with neighbouring schools, including: puppet workshops and after school sports clubs; use of local amenities to foster independent living skills; contributing to the upkeep of a

local allotment; local events such as an arts and drama festival; and representation in the local school parliament all help to strengthen personal development. Work experience for some students, including visits to workplaces and an emphasis on acquiring basic skills and independence prepare students very well for life after school. Attendance and punctuality are good.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers bring to lessons a determination that pupils and students will succeed and, coupled with imaginative teaching strategies and attention to detail, this ensures that pupils and students enjoy and achieve very well. Lesson plans, and the individual targets for pupils and students that go with them, are based firmly on what pupils achieved in previous lessons and on what they need to do next, either to make another small step or to reinforce what has been learnt already. Lessons take in a range of learning, including physical, social, and emotional. Many aspects of teaching are exemplary, including the use of visual cues and materials to engage pupils and develop their communication skills, detailed organisation and crystal-clear explanation and the detailed and frequent recording of pupils' responses in lessons. Skilful and targeted questioning and well-designed learning activities help teachers to check on, and reinforce, learning at nearly every opportunity.

Overall, the various needs of the different groups of pupils are catered for well: for example, ICT and other augmentative and assistive communication aids are used by teachers to help pupils and students access the curriculum and to participate in lessons, although some ICT equipment could be updated. High quality, experienced and well trained support staff work together with teachers in class teams to keep pupils involved. In Base 1 the needs of pupils with PMLD are met well through a multi-disciplinary approach, including using physiotherapy and medical staff, to ensure that their well-being is promoted in all lessons.

The teaching of music and physical education is also exemplary. Pupils have access to fun, challenging and stimulating lessons. In addition, their experiences in these subjects are enriched by extra-curricular activities and drama and music performances are often of high quality. Behaviour management plans for pupils are always developed in consultation with parents and this leads to a consistent approach at home and at school, helping to promote positive behaviour as well as good teaching and learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school offers the national curriculum, altered wherever needed to meet the needs of the pupils. Integrated planning ensures that learning in one area, physical movement for example, supports learning in all others. A wealth of visual teaching and learning aids allow pupils and students to understand the structure of their learning experiences, for example to the day's activities, and helps them contribute by identifying what they are expected to do, when it is, and what rewards there will be in return. This approach allows them to communicate frequently and with some confidence, expressing

preferences, views and ideas. Pupils with very specific needs follow a specially designed and well-suited curriculum: for example, some pupils who have ASD are taught in a low arousal environment and PMLD pupils follow a 'very small steps' curriculum with comprehensive schemes of work. Literacy and numeracy are taught well across the school. Post-16 students gain accreditation for their work and benefit from vocational experience as well as careers advice and guidance.

A range of extra-curricular activities, including some that are offered jointly with neighbouring schools, provide pupils with important opportunities to develop physically, emotionally and socially. For example, a number of older pupils recently completed the Liverpool half-marathon and others are involved in a scheme for gifted and talented young sportsmen and women. Other activities include a lunch time dance club, film making and trips and visits to art galleries and museums.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Very high priority is given to keeping pupils and students healthy and safe and helping them do this for themselves. Teaching and other staff are trained to promote the welfare

of pupils and deal with any difficulties quickly but sensitively. They actively promote safeguarding by being vigilant, making sure that pupils and students are safe and cared

for. All proper checks are made on staff.

Very good links with outside agencies help to ensure that the available specialist help for

pupils and students is highly effective, although sometimes the available recourses are

stretched thinly. Particular attention is paid to ensuring that looked after pupils achieve and are cared for, although some personal education plans could refer to personal learning targets a little more.

Assessment of the progress made by pupils in all areas of their development is well established and some pilot work is underway to involve even more pupils and students in giving their own reviews. Individual education plans are usually detailed and are underpinned by the precise and careful use of assessment to set and check on interim targets, ensuring that most pupils and students learn well or better. Students leaving the

school are supported as they move into other education, training or care settings. The work of the learning mentor, and other support staff, is highly respected and not only



supports learning but also enriches the pupils and students' experience of life more generally.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

A common purpose and clear vision, defined by an evident commitment to achieving the best for all pupils and students, permeates this outstanding school. The very self-critical but highly effective senior leadership team, led by a thoughtful and able headteacher who consults very well, has established a culture where high expectations and performance are the norm. All members of the senior leadership team are experienced and are expert leaders and managers. Training for staff is afforded high priority and this helps teachers and other staff to polish their considerable skills in dealing with the range and complexity of pupils' needs. Middle managers, too, play their part by leading subject developments, where they can, and are recognised by others in the school as experts in their field. The school recognises the benefits of developing a high level of specific expertise across all subjects in the school.

Performance management arrangements are very well focused as they are linked to the challenging targets set for pupils and students. Regular checks on the quality of teaching ensure that pupils make or exceed the expected progress and, in most cases, teachers are provided with very clear advice as to how to improve. Links with external agencies are exemplary, both in terms of advocacy of pupils' needs and the developing joint working that aims to place each pupil or student at the centre of a multi-agency team. The school works in collaboration with a network of 16 schools across Greater Merseyside, ensuring that SLD, PMLD and ASD best practice is shared across the area. This allows the school to benchmark its provision against similar settings.

All aspects of the school's performance are reviewed regularly and used to inform new developments. Self-evaluation is analytical and thoughtful and teachers, non-teaching staff and governors have been involved in identifying priorities for further development.

Available resources are deployed astutely to achieve excellent outcomes for pupils and students. The budget is managed very well although finding resources to recruit staff is not always easy and many items are expensive. Some equipment needs updating and not all areas of the school are as attractive as they might be. The delegated budget per pupil compares unfavourably to other similar schools in the North West although the school has been successful in securing some additional funding. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when the school was judged to be very good.

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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> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|                                                                                                                                                          |     |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 1   | 1   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?                                                                | 1   | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation                                                                                                        | 1   | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements                                                                                                          | 2   | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection                                                                         | Yes | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|                                                                                                          |   |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>                                                                     | 1 | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

|                                                                                                               |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 1 | 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                                    | 2 |   |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |   |

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

|                                                                                                                                              |     |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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   |     |
| 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 | 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 promised I would write you a letter. Please share what I write below with the other pupils and students. You can talk about how you might do this.

I liked your school very much. I enjoyed meeting you, seeing you in lessons and eating lunch with you. I also enjoyed listening to the school council and I think they are doing an excellent job.

Your school is lucky to have such good pupils and students as you. You are lucky to go to such a good school. In fact, it is so good that it stands out from others and it has got top marks.

And it can get even better. I have asked the school to try to get more help for you when you need it and to improve the school building so it can be easier to move around and that you can all have a bit more space. It would be nice, as well, if your playing fields weren't so soggy (so that you could use them to play on more) and if you didn't have to eat lunch in the hall.

I wish you every success in the future.