



Presfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104977
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 287081
Inspection dates 2–3 October 2006
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Preston New Road
School category	Community special		Churchtown, Southport
Age range of pupils	11–19		Merseyside PR9 8PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01704 227831
Number on roll (school)	49	Fax number	01704 232306
Number on roll (6th form)	8		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	
		Headteacher	Mrs Gaynor Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	2–3 October 2006	287081

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Presfield is a small special school for pupils aged 11 to 19 that has achieved the Sportsmark Award. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties. A small yet significant number have more severe learning difficulties or an element of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In 2005, a new base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and additional provision for students aged 16 to 19 were established. The former long-standing headteacher retired in July 2006 and the new headteacher took up her position in September 2006. Of the 57 pupils on roll, a small minority of pupils do not speak English as their main language or are looked after by the local authority.

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 good school that gives good value for money. Pupils enjoy coming to school because learning is fun and they feel safe and secure. The school's calm and positive ethos enables pupils with a range of learning, emotional and communication difficulties to grow in self-belief and independence. A pupil who recently joined the school said, 'you're totally safe and nobody picks on you'. Parents have a very high regard for the school, with one describing the impact on their child 'Their growth in confidence is a delight for everyone, especially the family, to witness'.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate overall but too modest in the evaluation of its leadership and management. The senior leadership team (SLT) has been well supported by governors in successfully establishing, over a short timescale, new provision for post-16 students and pupils with ASD. The SLT successfully developed other initiatives through Education Business Partnerships and college links. The outcome is a more relevant and appropriate curriculum for 14 to 19 year olds, including extended work experience that results in pupils being well prepared for their future.

The leadership of the ASD base is good and pupils make good progress in their learning and social interaction. They behave and relate well in the base but, as yet, have limited opportunities to contribute to and be involved in other lessons with pupils of their own age. Many of the staff have little experience of pupils with ASD and recognise their need for further training in teaching these pupils. The new headteacher has quickly established a clear picture of the school's position and has a clear vision for extending the inclusion of pupils with ASD. The effective management of finances has made significant funding available to the headteacher to drive the school forward with its new provision and initiatives.

Pupils' achievements are good. By the time they leave school they achieve good results in accredited courses in many subjects, with an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The more able pupils achieve well at GCSE in mathematics and art. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils make good progress in science and mathematics and satisfactory progress in English and ICT. The school sets targets for pupils to reach by the end of Year 9. Targets are not set for the end of Year 7 or Year 8 and the progress of these pupils is insufficiently tracked. This results in the differences in pupils' progress between subjects.

Pupils' personal development is good because of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory because a small number of pupils have significant problems with attendance. The school is tackling the issue with determination. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary and reflect the good care and support they receive. Their involvement in cultural events, residential visits and sporting activities develops a spirit and willingness to tackle new experiences with enthusiasm. Teaching is good; skilful questioning ensures that pupils are encouraged to contribute their own ideas and successfully develops their communication skills. Teaching assistants are outstanding in the support they give to pupils, enabling them to enjoy and make progress in the different tasks they are given.

The school successfully tackled the issues from the last inspection. The headteacher has inherited a committed, hard-working team that relishes the challenges and opportunities arising from the recent developments: this means that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form has only been established for one year but is rapidly developing its provision. It is well managed and provides a curriculum that is relevant and motivational for the students. They build upon their previous learning, following the Oxford and Cambridge RCA (OCR) National Skills Profile and undertaking extended work experiences. Students enjoy and make huge personal progress from these opportunities. They thrive on the independence demanded, and mature into young people who are aware of the options available to them and are ambitious about achieving them. Students are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle by attending a leisure and sports centre on a regular basis. The sixth form is extending students' life skills and working successfully towards bridging the gap between education and the next step in adult life. The small staff team has excellent relationships with students and creates an ethos where there is a high level of mutual respect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set targets for pupils in Years 7 and 8 in English, mathematics, science and ICT and carefully track their progress towards these.
- Increase the amount of inclusion for pupils with ASD in classes with pupils of a similar age.
- Provide further professional development for all teachers in meeting the needs of pupils with ASD.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Though achievement is good, data show that the progress in English and ICT is not as good as that in mathematics and science. The English teacher has identified a wide range of strategies to address this, including new initiatives to improve reading. In art and mathematics, pupils do very well with 50% of pupils achieving a pass in GCSE. This lays a firm foundation for students in the sixth form who, within a year, have achieved good grades in a wide range of modules in the OCR National Skills Profile. Pupils with ASD achieve well in improving their social interaction and communication skills, resulting in gains in self-esteem and confidence that lead to good progress in English, mathematics and science. The very small number of pupils who do not speak English as their main language make very good progress and receive excellent support. Across the curriculum, for example, in physical education, history, modern foreign languages, art and music, pupils make good progress and the overall impact is that

pupils are developing a wide range of skills that will significantly assist them in their economic well-being.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and are well equipped for the challenges they face when they leave school. Routines are very well established and clear boundaries are defined so pupils know what is expected of them. The effect is that pupils feel secure and safe - 'there is absolutely no bullying here,' said a pupil with ASD - leading to exemplary behaviour and respect for each other. The structured reward system celebrates pupils' successes and is very effective in building and boosting their self-esteem. Pupils are health conscious with healthy eating and drinking options actively encouraged. They participate in the array of sporting activities offered by staff and sporting coaches, with a number of pupils representing the local authority in athletics, football and netball teams. The school council is an active forum that pupils aspire to be elected to. Members are at ease in voicing their opinions because their views are listened to and therefore they are prepared to make suggestions to further improve the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching has many strengths that result in good gains in learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to ensure that all pupils are given the level of support that enables them to achieve the tasks set. In most cases the work set is appropriate to what each pupil is capable of. Occasionally expectations are not high enough and the work does not fully extend pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic and enjoy very good relationships with pupils, creating a positive ethos where pupils enjoy lessons and concentrate well. Lessons are thoroughly planned and pupils are frequently engaged in active and collaborative tasks that capture their interest and attention. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave and question them skilfully, improving their speaking and listening skills. Teachers are apprehensive about including pupils with ASD because of their challenging behaviour and recognise the need for further professional development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum and its enrichment are good. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to participate in. These are influential in motivating pupils and widening their horizons, particularly in gaining an understanding of the world outside of school. The innovations in the 14 to 19 curriculum lead to better opportunities to relate learning to the world of work and result in more mature students with higher aspirations for themselves. Various after-school clubs appeal to the interests of most pupils and motivate them to try new and challenging activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is a very safe and caring school where pupils feel valued and respected. Parents feel their children are very well looked after and are delighted with their progress academically and personally. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are very thorough and this means that the most vulnerable or at-risk pupils are quickly identified and supported. Arrangements for child protection and to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. The guidance that pupils receive from outside partnerships such as Connexions helps them in their personal and academic decisions. The very good guidance that pupils receive from teaching assistants means that pupils do not feel overawed by the challenges they face. Pupils with autism receive very good levels of care and support that enable them to take full advantage of what is on offer in school. The school sets appropriate targets for pupils to reach by the end of Year 9. Targets are not set for pupils to reach by the end of Years 7 or 8 and their progress in these year groups is insufficiently tracked. This impacts on the rate of their learning across different subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The new headteacher has quickly made her mark in the school, securing the confidence and commitment of staff and pupils. She has made an initial assessment of the school's priorities and set out her vision for enhancing the inclusive nature of the school. The SLT, with governor support, has implemented new initiatives within challenging timescales, resulting in a broadening of the provision at the school and a shared commitment to high standards. The leadership and management of the school have been instrumental in sustaining the positive ethos that has been influential in helping pupils to achieve well and, in many cases, discover a belief in themselves that was previously lacking. Governors have played a vital part in securing the smooth transition

from the previous headteacher to the new one. The outcome is that the school is united in its commitment to meeting the new challenges it faces and well positioned to move forward with enthusiasm and determination.

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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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	2	
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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	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 really enjoyed the two days that I spent in your school last week. Thank you for making me welcome and sharing your opinions about the school. I was very impressed by the way you helped each other and by the fact that you told me there was no bullying and you all felt safe and happy in school. There are many changes taking place in your school and now that there is a sixth form you will have more choice as to what you do when you are 16. I agree with your views about the good atmosphere in your school. You have many opportunities to take part in interesting and enjoyable activities, including having work experience when you are in Year 10 and after. I think you should be proud that you go to a good school and proud of your own achievements. The reasons you go to a good school are:

- staff help you to learn in every subject and make learning fun
- you work hard and behave well in lessons
- you get excellent help from teachers and teaching assistants.

I have had a long chat with Mrs Hirst and we have agreed that you could do even better if teachers set you targets to reach in every year group and checked that you were making the progress that you are capable of. We also think that all pupils want to spend as much time as possible with other pupils of the same age. The headteacher will help pupils to spend more time in other classes and take part in lessons with different teachers.

It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you can achieve well in your exams and choose the right college course to help you in the future. I hope you carry on working hard all year and continue to be as helpful to each other as I saw when I was in school.