



Foxfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105131
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287132
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Caroline Broomhead HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Douglas Drive
School category	Community special		Moreton, Wirral
Age range of pupils	11–19		Merseyside CH46 6BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6778555
Number on roll (school)	87	Fax number	0151 6785480
Number on roll (6th form)	51		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr G Stothard
		Headteacher	Mr A Baird
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	13–14 September 2006	287132

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Foxfield is a secondary school for pupils who have complex needs including severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorder, sensory impairment and physical disabilities. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school's wide catchment area includes parts of the Borough of Wirral that experience considerable deprivation and over half of pupils receive free school meals. Eleven pupils are in the care of the local authority. Most pupils are White British and there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. There are significantly more boys than girls at the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Foxfield is a good school with some outstanding features. The pupils are supported by outstanding care and guidance from a range of professionals throughout their time at school, and so mature into polite, courteous and responsible young people. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance and positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum is carefully tailored to suit the pupils' needs and abilities and prepares them well for moving on to adult life. Opportunities for pupils to learn a modern foreign language are, however, too limited. As a result of the good teaching the pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development. The school has recognised that some of the older pupils have the ability to achieve higher level qualifications than those currently offered by the school. Most pupils experience difficulties in communicating with others and symbols are used well to help them but signing is not used consistently and is not therefore as effective as it could be. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation are firmly embedded in the culture of the school. Consequently, the staff have a good understanding of its strengths and plans for further development. Foxfield is an outward-looking school which sets high standards for itself and develops excellent partnerships with others in the wider community for the benefit of its pupils. The wealth of staff expertise at Foxfield is sought and valued by other schools in the area. Parents are positive about the school and the progress their children are making. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation and the specialist facilities are proving popular with staff and pupils alike. However, the steadily increasing numbers are placing a strain on the organisation of the school and temporary mobile classrooms are being used as class bases. The school manages these difficulties well but is further hindered in its efforts by the fact that parts of the school are not physically accessible to all pupils, thus restricting opportunities to create distinct areas for the different age groups. The governors continue to provide good support and effective challenge. The school is managing an agreed deficit budget brought about by factors outside its control and has appropriate plans to eradicate this by 2008. Nevertheless, the school provides good value for money and its capacity to bring about further improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provision is good with many strengths. The number of pupils choosing to stay at the school to age 19 has risen significantly. The curriculum places great emphasis on preparing the pupils for adult life and focuses on developing their ability to live independently and their awareness of the world of work using realistic settings in the community. Careful attention is paid to promoting pupils' personal safety and well-being. The pupils enjoy their time in the sixth form and respond positively and responsibly to the increasing challenges they face. Support for pupils is carefully

planned and appropriately reduced as they become more confident and independent. They make good progress in relation to their abilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to improve physical access to all parts of the school building.
- Extend the range of accreditation available to older pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn a modern foreign language.
- Make more effective use of signing to support pupils' communication.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school accurately judges that the pupils make good progress in their learning in relation to their abilities and starting points. Their attainment ranges from National Curriculum level P1 to Level 2, with a small number of pupils reaching Level 3 in some aspects of their work. In literacy some pupils are learning, with support, to make marks on paper, whilst others are practising writing short sentences. In reading pupils use symbols to help them to read key words and the most able can read simple sentences. Some pupils are more confident than others in using signs and symbols to help them to make their thoughts and feelings known. Where staff model and encourage the use of signing, the pupils respond very positively. As pupils mature their ability to listen and follow simple instructions improves. For example, a pupil may be asked to go to another room and collect a particular item and return to the classroom and will do this successfully, whereas another pupil may simply be asked to collect a pencil from a nearby table. Pupils make particularly good strides in developing their social skills and their ability to live independently. Four pupils now confidently travel independently using public transport. Many older pupils attend weekly work experience placements and 34 pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 successfully attend local mainstream schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is good. As a result of the school's focus on healthy living pupils are beginning to choose healthier food options at lunchtime and snack time. They are also more aware of their own safety and that of others and this can be seen throughout the school day as they move around school, as well as when they are out in the community. Additional physical education lessons have been introduced to encourage pupils to be more active. The physiotherapy sessions play a particularly important part in helping those pupils with severe physical disabilities to retain as much mobility and flexibility in their limbs as possible.

The pupils enjoy their time at school and attend regularly. They usually willingly take part in lessons although on occasion staff find they need to gently cajole those who prefer to take a passive role. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. A significant number of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, usually related to their medical or emotional needs. With skilled support from staff they learn to manage their own aggression and frustration to varying degrees depending on their individual difficulties.

As they mature pupils show that they know right from wrong and are proud when they earn their merit or citizenship awards for good work and effort. They are encouraged to make choices and were all involved in voting for their school council representatives. Members of the school council overcame their communication difficulties and spoke confidently about their involvement in the appointment of new staff and were able to explain the process. They also represented their peers well in putting forward what improvements the pupils would like to see in the school. These views are taken seriously by the school and acted upon. This process undoubtedly had a significant impact on these young people's self-esteem. Throughout the day pupils can be seen to warm to the praise they receive when they complete a task set for them and this boosts their confidence in themselves and encourages them to try harder. During multicultural week the pupils found themselves experiencing the lifestyles and traditions of different countries and cultures and clearly enjoyed this time.

The pupils are exceptionally well prepared for adult life. They learn to look after themselves, to shop and use money for leisure activities, and to practise work skills. Learning in the community is a regular feature in their school week. They all have an opportunity to go on an annual residential trip to broaden their horizons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching in this school is good with many strengths. Along with an increase in the numbers of pupils on roll has been an increasing complexity in their needs. Teaching staff have responded by developing their expertise and this is reflected in the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' learning. Detailed assessment establishes a secure baseline from which teachers set suitably challenging individual targets and track pupils' small steps of progress across all aspects of the curriculum. The school has also recently established a system to assess and track pupils' growing self-esteem. Teachers are skilled in adapting their lessons to respond to pupils' moods and attitudes on a day-by-day basis. They establish clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and manage any incidents of inappropriate behaviour calmly, consistently and professionally. Their goal is clearly to encourage pupils to participate actively in learning and they celebrate the pupils' achievements at every opportunity. Pupils particularly enjoy those lessons where they are kept busy, where they can get on with some tasks on their own, where

they can call on support when they need it and where they have fun. They find practical activities and visual resources most interesting. Pupils do not learn as well in lessons where they have to wait their turn or are heavily reliant on a teacher's attention to get on with the tasks set for them. Teachers are particularly skilled in their questioning techniques and successfully draw out pupils' responses, even when they would prefer to remain quiet. Teaching assistants provide good support and where they are confident about their roles in particular lessons, they are most effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and relevant to pupils' needs and abilities. It gives appropriate emphasis to developing pupils' independent living skills as well as their academic skills. Every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' literacy and social skills across the curriculum. Pupils are taught mainly in ability groupings within each key stage and this contributes to the good progress that they make in their learning. To promote social development, pupils are given many opportunities to be included in lessons in local mainstream schools and those with more profound and multiple learning difficulties join in lessons with other groups in the school at different times in the week. There have been significant improvements in the provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection and teachers and staff are growing in their confidence in using the new smartboard technology which is present in some classrooms.

Although the school raises pupils' awareness of other languages during the annual multicultural week, opportunities for them to learn, and enjoy, a modern foreign language are inadequate and do not meet statutory requirements. Work-related learning and enterprise activity are particular strengths in the curriculum offered and contribute significantly to how well pupils are prepared for adult life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are outstanding. Robust procedures are in place to promote the safety and well-being of all pupils. The teaching staff and other professionals work closely with parents to ensure that pupils' physical and medical needs are met. Arrangements for pupils joining the school are carefully planned to ensure that they make a successful transition. Throughout their time in school, pupils are given excellent guidance from school staff and the Connexions adviser. Visits and placements are arranged so that pupils can fully prepare themselves for moving onto to colleges or other placements when they leave school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good provision in this school stems from its good leadership and management, which in some respects is outstanding. The headteacher encourages and supports staff at all levels to be innovative, to engage in honest self-review and to strive for continual improvement. The school richly deserves its Investor in People award. School improvement is clearly driven by the school's rigorous monitoring and accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Data about pupils' progress is now being collated in a form which will enable the school to analyse in more depth the performance of groups of pupils as well as individuals and to identify any underachievement. The quality of teaching and accuracy of assessment is routinely monitored. As a result the school knows where its expertise lies and what improvements are needed. It also gives confidence to teachers and managers about the accuracy of pupils' progress. Middle managers are becoming increasingly confident in their roles and their plans and enthusiasm are valued by senior managers. The school takes its responsibilities for promoting pupils' welfare seriously and has robust procedures in place to achieve this. The governors support the school well and are beginning to take up the opportunity to link directly with subject coordinators.

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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?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
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	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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

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?	1	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?	2	2
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	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	No
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 for welcoming me to your school earlier this week and giving your time to tell me about your school.

These are the main findings from the inspection.

- Foxfield is a good school. The staff take very good care of you and give you plenty of support and guidance.
- The teaching is good and I know that you really enjoy the practical activities which the teachers plan for you.
- You make good progress in your learning and can be proud of all that you are achieving.
- I was particularly impressed with how well you are developing your independent living skills and I know that some of you have successfully learned to travel independently using public transport - well done.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well and keeps a close check on how well things are going. He is well supported in this by the senior managers and other staff.
- The governors are pleased with how the school has progressed since the last inspection and know what needs to be done for it to improve further.
- Your school council represents you well and you can be proud of them.

These are the main points which the school should improve.

- Some of the older pupils could achieve higher qualifications in addition to the ones you already do.
- The school needs to provide more opportunities for you to learn a modern foreign language.
- All the staff and pupils should use their signing more regularly to help you to communicate better with each other.
- Some of you cannot get into all parts of the school because you are not able to climb steps or stairs. The school and the local authority should work together to see what changes can be made to the building to help overcome this difficulty for you.

Once again, thank you for your support with this inspection. You and your staff can be proud of what you have achieved and I wish you every success for the future.