



Grange School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105622
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287278
Inspection dates 16–17 October 2006
Reporting inspector Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special	School address	77 Dickenson Road
School category	Community special		Rusholme, Manchester
Age range of pupils	4–19		Lancashire M14 5AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2484841
Number on roll (school)	60	Fax number	0161 2486715
Number on roll (6th form)	6		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Anne Rushton
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew Smith
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–19	16–17 October 2006	287278

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school makes provision for pupils with autism. A significant number of pupils have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities and medical conditions. There are significantly more boys than girls. The school's staffing structure has recently been reorganised to prepare the way for moving to new sites as part of the local authority's proposed strategy to improve its provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum. The school also provides outreach support for mainstream schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average. Seven different mother tongue languages are spoken in their family settings. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is exceptionally high. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco Schools Award.

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. In a short space of time the headteacher has successfully managed change in the structure of the school and raised the achievement of pupils. The creation of distinct primary and secondary phase departments has improved the curriculum and given pupils increased opportunities to exercise independent choices. The way has been paved for provision which provides quality outreach support to mainstream schools. The staffing structure created fits the proposed local authority strategy – two new purpose built schools for pupils with autism (one primary and one secondary).

The majority of pupils make rapid gains in communicating what they want using pictures and speech. Their development of a repertoire of skills to assist them to cope, without excessive worry, is excellent. They work together on exciting projects, reflecting excellent achievement for pupils with autism. Achievement in academic studies is good for the vast majority of pupils although their attainment is below that typical for their age. Gains in important life skills, confidence and independence are excellent for all pupils. A few pupils with complex needs stick at the same level in English and mathematics because the assessment system is not sufficiently refined to provide them with very small stepped targets to raise their achievement. Achievement is good overall. Teaching is good throughout the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' good progress. Teaching takes into account the needs of individual pupils, ensures that they are all included in planned activities and moves them forward in their learning. The school provides good value for money.

Pupils' personal development is good. They have an aptitude for learning because activities are structured around their interests. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of exercise and know why it is important to eat healthy foods. The equipping of pupils with the skills required to cope independently in society lies at the heart of this successful school. The curriculum is tailor made to meet the needs of pupils with autism. The quality of care is satisfactory overall. Links with a range of external agencies support vulnerable pupils well, with the exception of those in need of specialist speech therapy who have not had any much needed support for over six months. Home to school transport is efficient, but escorts do not consistently use the agreed methods of communication and the appropriate strategies to manage the behaviour of pupils in their care. The newly established senior leadership team has already implemented initiatives which have improved the quality of provision for pupils. Capacity for improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Recent changes to the curriculum and a recently introduced accredited course have driven up standards. Students make rapid gains in independence. They are skilful communicators, using pictures and speech. Students have good opportunities to attend college to develop important life skills. A high expectation pervades the sixth form provision and is evidenced in the students' personalised

programmes. Each student is well known to the teacher in charge who plans to meet their needs. For those with the potential to hold down a job, there is an emphasis on developing independent travel skills. Others are linked to projects in the community matched to their interests so as to develop their life and work related skills. Achievement is good as is teaching. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils with the most complex needs are given small stepped targets to raise their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that all pupils who require speech therapy receive their entitlement.
- Ensure that all escorts deployed for home to school transport of pupils are consistent in the manner in which they communicate with pupils and manage their behaviour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good overall. Throughout the school, the vast majority of pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. A few pupils with complex needs do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment is not sharp enough to provide them with very small stepped targets to move them on. All pupils are equipped to cope with change and this is a significant achievement. As they make rapid gains in confidence, their ability to communicate choices improves significantly. As pupils learn to work together and begin to understand each other, they take a rapid step forward in coping in society with their autism. This too is a major achievement. Progress in independent life skills is good. All pupils are prepared to live as independently as possible. Work related skills are promoted exceptionally well for pupils with the potential to enter the workplace.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They have positive attitudes to learning. They say, 'We like school because it supports us in our learning through our special interests'. Behaviour is good. Pupils with challenging behaviour (associated with their autism) are successfully equipped to cope with their anxiety when faced with changes in their daily routine. Attendance is good. Pupils' health and fitness are promoted well. Through the school council, pupils are involved in making decisions to improve their playground. Their work related skills have been developed well through their involvement in local community projects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers use visual cues to challenge and support pupils. They are adept at modifying activities so that they match pupils' needs. This successfully engages pupils in learning and they make good progress. Pictures are used to promote pupils' communication and to enable them to make choices about how they present their work. There is a focus on developing life skills in all lessons. Challenging behaviour is managed skilfully and so pupils are kept on task. Team work between teachers and teaching assistants is very good. Sometimes the absence of fine tuned assessment of pupils with the most complex needs impedes teachers' ability to move them on in small steps. On these occasions there is underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It is planned well and meets pupils' needs. Tailor made programmes enable pupils to develop strategies to cope with anxiety when faced with new or unfamiliar situations. Through a flexible and innovative curriculum, pupils' confidence to communicate independent choices is developed well. Exciting community projects promote pupils collaborative skills well. This is a significant strength because pupils with autism often find it very hard to work together. Following a recent analysis of pupils' performance, the school has made the decision to develop a more sensory curriculum. Although this has raised achievement overall, the planning for this approach is not consistent across all subjects. Sensory activities have not yet been sufficiently planned in geography and history, for example.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has been too generous in its evaluation of the quality of care it provides. Effective links with a range of external agencies support pupils well, but crucially they do not have sufficient access to speech therapy. Pupils say, 'We feel safe when a pupil kicks off in class because our teachers deal with it well'. They trust adults in school and tell them about anything that bothers them. Child protection procedures are robust. Risk assessments are thorough. Home to school transport is efficient, but the escorts used are not consistent in the way in which they communicate with pupils, and manage their behaviour. Pupils' academic progress is tracked, but this is not sharp enough to measure the very small steps of progress made by pupils with the most severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that all pupils are fully included in every aspect of school life. Recent organisational changes have driven up standards and positioned the school strongly to fit the local authority's proposed strategy for autism. Changes made have already brought about a significant number of improvements, particularly in the curriculum and the opportunities provided for pupils to make and communicate their choices. Pupils also have more opportunities to collaborate. This equips them to manage their behaviour and to develop the skills to integrate in society. Subject leadership is improving. Good systems enable the school to know how well it is performing. From checks made, robust actions are put in place to raise achievement. Some of these actions have not yet bedded down and so it is too early to evaluate their impact on raising achievement. Opportunities for pupils to work with their peers at college have increased. The school's outreach support to mainstream schools is greatly appreciated by teachers working with pupils who have autistic traits. Governance is numerically under strength and this impedes its effectiveness. Nonetheless, the governing body has developed the role of critical friend very well and ensures that statutory requirements are met.

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	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	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?	3	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	2	
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	3	
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

Thank you for your warm welcome. I enjoyed talking with you about your interests, and I am delighted with the enthusiasm you have for learning.

What I judge to be good about your school

- Your rapid gains in making choices using pictures and speech.
- The confidence you gain and the fact that you are equipped to live independently.
- The good progress you make in English, mathematics and science because of the good teaching you receive.
- The way in which you try to keep fit and healthy.
- The fact that you are involved in making decisions about your education, and your future when you leave school.
- The work related skills you develop.
- The good leadership and management provided by your head teacher.

What I have asked your school to do now

- To improve the targets they give you so you can achieve even better.
- To make sure that all of you who need it receive speech therapy.
- To make sure that the escorts who help you on your journeys to and from school always communicate with you in a way in which you understand.

Please keep up your hard work to make your school an even better one.