



Talbot School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107178
Local Authority Sheffield
Inspection number 287732
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Rosemary Eaton

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Matthews Lane
School category	Community special		Norton, Sheffield
Age range of pupils	11–19		South Yorkshire S8 8JS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2507394
Number on roll (school)	98	Fax number	0114 2507857
Number on roll (6th form)	37		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Ruth Tiddy
		Headteacher	Ms Judith Smith
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	17–18 January 2007	287732

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a school for students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, around one quarter have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Over one third of those with severe learning difficulties also have autistic spectrum disorders. A minority of students have significant medical needs and a small proportion present behaviour that challenges. Around one quarter of students are from minority ethnic groups. A very few students are asylum seekers and a similar proportion are looked after children. The school has gained the Investors in People award, Artsmark Silver and the Football Association Chartermark. In April 2006, the substantive headteacher was seconded to manage the local authority's Building Schools for the Future project. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by an acting headteacher.

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 with many outstanding features, providing good value for money. The school is continually moving forward and retains the very high regard of parents. The oldest students say they will be sad to leave. From their first days in Year 7, students quickly develop excellent relationships with the staff and these make a big contribution to their wholehearted enjoyment of school. Outstanding care, guidance and support provide all students with opportunities to make excellent progress in their personal development. An extensive programme of staff training and exceptionally good links with a host of agencies help all students, including the most vulnerable, to feel safe. Very good behaviour is one way in which students themselves make sure the school is safe and happy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is promoted constantly. For instance, frequent visits and visitors accustom students to mixing and working with unfamiliar people, helping to prepare them for their lives beyond school. They learn about healthy lifestyles and take part enthusiastically in the wide ranging physical education programme and sporting competitions. The curriculum is adapted well to meet students' various learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff regularly use considerable ingenuity to provide stimulating opportunities for learning, appropriate to students' ages and interests. Nevertheless, the curriculum for Key Stage 4 students does not provide a strong enough link with the range of work covered in the sixth form. In particular, the provision for work-related learning is too limited.

Owing to students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are very much lower than those found in mainstream schools. However, students make good progress and achieve well. By the time they leave all students have gained external accreditation, recognising their achievements. Their progress is the direct result of good quality teaching, rooted firmly in teachers' detailed assessments of what each student knows, understands and can do. Individual education plans set out clearly the next step students need to take, enabling the school and parents to evaluate each student's learning from one year to the next. Recently, a new system was introduced to track students' progress more efficiently as they move up through the school. However, not enough information has yet been gathered to enable senior staff to use assessment data in order to identify quickly if the progress of particular groups of students is slowing down. There are effective systems to provide accurate information about the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of the school's performance, such as the quality of teaching.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is well led and managed, with a determination to enable students to be as independent as possible. To this end, staff work hard and successfully to equip students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes they will need for the next stage in their lives. Students achieve well, with many gaining the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation network (ASDAN) Towards Independence award. The curriculum

offers many opportunities for learning at first-hand about community facilities and options for further education. Students have appropriate opportunities for good quality college courses. The school struggles to find suitable work experience placements in the community and so not all students have this experience. Students readily take on responsibilities, such as volunteering for the 'Job Squad'. The oldest students are sociable and confident, able and willing to express their opinions and make choices.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make full use of assessment information to identify quickly if any groups of students are underachieving.
- Improve the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 so students learn more about the world of work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

When they join the school, students are working at levels very much lower than those expected for their age, but in line with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Annually, they are each set challenging targets and on average the large majority of these are met. This figure reflects the good progress made in key skills such as communication, application of number, information and communication technology and problem solving. Occasionally, individuals make remarkable progress in communication, for example, moving from exchanging symbols to vocalising. All students, including the most vulnerable and those from minority ethnic groups, make equally good progress overall. For instance, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties move forward in very small steps, but their achievement is just as good as that of those who learn faster.

Students' good achievement in Years 10 and 11 shows in their successes in the ASDAN Transition Challenge course. Also, for the first time recently, eight students achieved the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students take full advantage of the many opportunities for them to contribute to the school community. For example, school council members are involved in interviews for new teachers, devising questions and evaluating the responses. A share of the profits from this year's 'Work Week', which involved students being enterprising and selling goods and services, were donated to charity. Activities such as this enable the wider community to benefit from students' efforts. Students enjoy all aspects of the school, especially lessons, going out and about and their relationships with staff. As a result attendance is good, particularly when the number of students with medical

problems is considered. Cultural development is promoted very strongly, for example, through work in art and literacy and regular visits from a variety of musicians. In return, students very much relish taking part in concerts and performances. These experiences also boost their confidence and communication skills. They readily face personal and physical challenges during residential visits to activity centres and through sporting events. Years 8 and 9 students are currently on track to achieve the Lord Mayor's Award, which is designed to recognise and celebrate student's personal skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers have high expectations for students and overall plan lessons very carefully in order to meet their differing needs. For example, in a numeracy lesson for Year 7 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, staff were very aware of the targets each one was aiming to achieve and exactly how to encourage them. As a result students tried extremely hard and were very successful. However, there are occasions in other classes when individual students are not given sufficiently challenging work. The teamwork amongst staff is exceptional and the expertise of support staff is used fully to help students to learn. Staff are very well trained in managing students' behaviour. They apply their detailed knowledge of each student by judging accurately when to intervene, by distracting attention or changing an activity, for example, so lessons and learning can proceed smoothly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is constantly reviewed and developed. For instance, 'Themed Days' have recently been introduced in Key Stage 3. These enable students to make links between subjects, by learning about topics such as 'Famous People' and provide new contexts for them to apply skills. The Key Stage 4 curriculum meets statutory requirements but is not planned fully for students' learning to feed seamlessly into sixth form work. For instance, students do not have opportunities for work experience in school. The accommodation does not meet the needs of the students or the curriculum and presents daily obstacles for staff to overcome. However, the school expects to move into new, purpose built accommodation during 2008. Extensive links with other schools and the community significantly extend and enhance the curriculum, for example, through sports coaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership of all aspects of students' care and personal support is extremely well informed. Systems to protect students are clear and their application is monitored rigorously. Nothing is left to chance. Parents greatly appreciate the school's efforts, one commenting on the 'wonderful caring attitude'. Links with other agencies and professionals are numerous and students benefit from full time nursing cover and on-site therapists. When possible, students contribute to their annual reviews. Work is ongoing to develop this involvement further through projects to increase their ability to make decisions about their personal targets and future direction. Students and their families are kept well informed about their options beyond school. Students' academic progress is assessed carefully and the outcomes used very well to modify lessons and the curriculum to meet individual needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The acting headteacher is building very successfully on the achievements of the substantive headteacher. She has the highest aspirations for the school and is very strongly supported by the members of the senior leadership team. They share the acting headteacher's determination to maintain the pace of developments as the school begins to prepare for its relocation. As a result, the school has a very good capacity to become even better. Delegation is a very strong feature of the leadership, with senior teaching assistants taking responsibility for a number of whole school issues. The acting Headteacher identified the need to make better use of assessment information, to set targets for different groups of students, for example. There has not yet been time for the resulting system to be fully effective in further increasing the rate of students' progress. A well organised programme of lesson observations by the acting headteacher and her deputy provides an accurate view of the quality of teaching. The outcomes of self-evaluation are used very effectively to identify priorities and training needs. This has helped to secure good improvement since the previous inspection. Governors are very supportive and bring valuable expertise. They are increasingly finding out about the school at first-hand. The school is very outward looking and regularly supports others by providing training, for example, in signing.

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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	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	
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	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?	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	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	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

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my time with you and I want to let you know what I found out about the school. I know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter.

I was pleased to see how happy you are in school. You do lots of things to help your teachers and other students and give money to charity. Well done. The teachers arrange some very exciting activities for you, which I know you enjoy. I think the Years 10 and 11 students should learn more about what it is like to go to work.

You all try very hard and you learn a lot. This is because you have good teachers. They have found a new way to keep an eye on your progress. I want them to use this to find more ways to help you all get on even better. You told me you feel safe in school. I'm not surprised, because you are cared for outstandingly well. Your mums, dads and carers think you go to a good school and I agree.

It will be very exciting when you move to your new building. I hope you all continue to learn a lot and have fun.