



Fairfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107802
Local Authority Kirklees
Inspection number 287916
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
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	White Lee Road
School category	Community special		Batley
Age range of pupils	3–19		West Yorkshire WS17 8AS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01924326103
Number on roll (school)	75	Fax number	01924 325702
Number on roll (6th form)	25		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Pauline Lawton
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Ware
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This is a school for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, serving the northern district of Kirklees. Currently, 60 of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and 40 have severe learning difficulties. Pupils from Asian backgrounds are in the majority, with just over half of the pupils being in the early stages of learning English. A very small minority of pupils are 'looked after'. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in the school's Early Years Centre, alongside children in the Foundation Stage. The school has achieved Artsmark Gold, the Eco School Award, Football Association Charter mark, and the Quality Standard for Careers Advice and Guidance. The headteacher has been in post for two years. In September 2006 the school moved to a new, purpose built site. Several members of staff, including senior leaders, joined the school at this time. At the time of the inspection, not all areas of the building were ready for use.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. Owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities the standards reached by pupils are exceptionally low when compared to those found in mainstream schools. During their time in school pupils make satisfactory, though uneven, progress and they achieve satisfactorily overall. In the Early Years Centre and in the sixth form progress is fastest and achievement is good. This is because, in these departments of the school, teaching is high quality and the curriculum is well organised. In Years 3 to 11 staffing difficulties and learning opportunities, that were sometimes mundane, led to pupils' progress slowing down in recent years. Following the appointment of the headteacher the staffing issues were tackled successfully and consistent whole school procedures established, for instance, for managing pupils with challenging behaviour. Very recently a number of new teachers have joined the school, strengthening the staff team. Nevertheless, in Years 3 to 11, the quality of teaching is currently satisfactory rather than good and the curriculum is not well planned to meet pupils' changing needs year on year. Individual education plans include precise targets and are reviewed regularly, so teachers are able to keep a close eye on how well each pupil is learning. However, the information is not collated in such a way as to provide senior staff with a clear overview of the progress of different groups of pupils, for instance, those with a particular learning difficulty. Pupils are confident learners, having settled remarkably quickly into the excellent new building. A host of agencies and professionals work closely with school staff to ensure that every pupil's physical, medical, social and emotional needs are met. This commitment to their welfare encourages pupils to care for each other and contribute to the wider community, through fundraising and recycling, for example. All pupils have plenty of varied opportunities for taking exercise or practising their mobility skills, helping them to keep healthy. They become increasingly independent, in response to the staff's high expectations.

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses enabling him to identify what needs to be done in order to improve achievement. To this end the staffing structure has now been completely reorganised, with an extended, experienced and enthusiastic leadership team. Detailed action plans illustrate clearly the shared determination to build quickly on the spadework completed already. Discrepancies in the performance of the different departments in the school are being ironed out, but there has not yet been time to see a measurable impact on pupils' achievement. Despite the upheaval of the relocation and significant changes in roles and responsibilities, optimism, strong teamwork and the highest aspirations pervade the whole school, confirming its good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school provides well for its sixth form students and their achievement is good. Strong leadership and management results in a well planned curriculum, focused clearly on the knowledge and skills that students need now and in their future lives, for

instance, handling money and using technology such as mobile phones. Regular use of community facilities and a college course contribute to students' good personal development and staff encourage them to become increasingly responsible. As one student said, 'We are expected to be more sensible in the sixth form.' Staff are working to ensure that lunchtimes are used effectively to promote students' independence and social skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 11 so pupils learn faster and achieve more.
- Refine assessment systems to enable pupils' long term progress to be tracked accurately and efficiently.
- Develop the curriculum in Years 3 to 11 to ensure that all pupils benefit consistently from rich and relevant experiences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 achieve well. They make good progress in all the areas of learning because staff see to it that each child has a balanced diet of experiences linked closely to their particular needs. Currently, progress slows from Year 3 to 11 and achievement is satisfactory, rather than good. However, pupils often make good progress in learning to communicate and in their physical development and mobility, owing to the consistent focus on these areas, throughout the school day. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not follow accredited courses and this means that their achievements are not fully recognised. In contrast, sixth form students have all aspects of their work accredited through Mencap's Essential Skills awards or the school's own certificates. Although pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties move forward in smaller steps than those with less complex needs their achievement is similar when their particular learning difficulties are taken into account. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who are 'looked after' also achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Assemblies make effective contributions to helping pupils enjoy the diversity of cultures represented in the school and racial harmony is one of its strong features. Pupils respond very positively to encouragement to develop their social skills, for example, by collaborating as members of sports teams, the choir, or the 'Fairfield Funky Folk' Morris dancers. Those with the most complex needs learn

to cooperate with the adults who work with them and regularly make enormous efforts, for instance, to operate a switch with their head so as to listen to a recorded story. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as delivering registers. Plans are in hand to introduce a school council, the lack of which currently reduces pupils' potential to influence school life. Pupils' enjoyment and anticipation are very evident as they arrive at school and they are seldom absent unless they are ill.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the Early Years Centre, where teaching is good, activities are exciting and very well organised, so every child is consistently involved and stimulated to learn. Similarly, tasks in the sixth form are chosen carefully to meet students' current and future needs. In Years 3 to 11 a number of teachers are either very new to the school or are being helped to develop their expertise. As a result, teaching is more variable, though lessons are usually relevant to what pupils need to learn next. The staff in each classroom work together well, sharing their knowledge of pupils and agreeing how best to support them. Teaching assistants are high calibre and their skills, and those of local authority or health trust staff, have a significant impact on pupils' learning and personal development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory and considerable work is taking place to improve what is provided in Years 3 to 11. Currently, teachers of these year groups do not have enough guidance to ensure that pupils' experiences in all subjects build on their previous work, are varied and pave the way for the next phase in their education. These requirements are already met in the Early Years Centre and the sixth form. From Year 7 onwards good attention is paid to work-related learning, helping to prepare pupils for their lives beyond school. Performing arts and sporting activities are successful aspects of curriculum throughout the school, contributing well to pupils' personal development and achievement. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have a suitable balance of specialised lessons, with a strong sensory focus, and opportunities to work alongside those with severe learning difficulties.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is a good aspect of the school. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they have concerns. Child protection arrangements are very clear and comprehensive and pupils' personal care needs are met efficiently and sensitively. The school's determination to overcome any obstacles to pupils' welfare and learning is illustrated well by the recent creation of a family liaison service. There is very clear evidence that this exciting innovation is playing a powerful role in ensuring pupils' well-being and consequent ability to benefit from lessons and activities. There are satisfactory arrangements for identifying what individual pupils need to learn next. In conjunction with the local authority and other schools a computerised system is being established to more effectively measure pupils' progress as they move up through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has planned systematically and successfully for it to reach this important stage in its development and so is well placed to move forward. For instance, the new staffing structure is based on four departmental teams, such as the one for Key Stages 3 and 4 staff, each headed by a member of the senior leadership team. This is resulting in consistent approaches and expectations through strong leadership and very clear lines of communication in the senior team and those for each department. Work with other agencies is a key strength, with every effort made to enable different professionals to work together and share expertise. Parents are very supportive and their views are taken into account when decisions are made. Governors share the headteacher's determination to make Fairfield a centre of excellence. They are kept well informed about its progress and are developing ways of finding out more at first hand.

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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?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	NA
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?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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	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	3	
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 being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I enjoyed my short time with you and this letter is to tell you what I found out about Fairfield. I know that you find reading difficult, so your teachers will help you.

I was very pleased to see how hard you all work and how much you enjoy being at school. The new building is fantastic and the staff have worked very hard to help you settle in so quickly.

The children in the Early Years Centre and the sixth form students are learning well. I want your teachers to make sure that every one of you makes such good progress. I've asked your headteacher to find a better way for the teachers to record what you learn, so it is easier for him to keep a close eye on how well you are each getting on.

This was the first time I'd been to a school that does Morris dancing, so I was very interested to hear about that. I know you do lots of other exciting activities as well. I would like all your lessons and topics to be as varied and useful as possible, to help you all learn fast.

I wish you all well for the future.