



Weatherfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109736
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 288479
Inspection dates 11 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Margaret Goodchild AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Brewers Hill Road
School category	Community special		LU6 1AF
Age range of pupils	7 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 605632
Number on roll	136	Fax number	01582 605632
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Mike Tilley JP
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2001	Headteacher	Mr. Carl Peters

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, although increasing numbers of pupils have joined the school in the last few years with more complex needs. As a result of their learning difficulties and disabilities, pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average. Most pupils are White British, from varied social backgrounds, and there are nearly twice as many boys as girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspection findings show that this is a good school, although senior managers judge that it is satisfactory with some good features. It enables pupils to make good progress in their personal development and to achieve well academically. Pupils are happy and confident and, by the time they leave, most have gained a number of nationally recognised qualifications. This is because staff work as a dedicated team who care about the pupils. The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and the school farm makes an outstanding contribution to their development. Teaching is good overall although teachers do not always make as much use as they should of information about the next steps in pupils' learning to match work to the needs of individual pupils. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body provide good leadership for the school. They are committed to meeting pupils' needs and have been exceptionally successful in recruiting and retaining experienced teachers. Procedures for collecting information about the school's effectiveness and for planning whole-school improvement are too informal, however, and not as rigorous as they should be. Improvement since the last inspection has, therefore, been satisfactory and the school is soundly placed to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend and formalise the way the school's work is monitored and evaluated by managers at all levels and the way whole-school improvement is planned. - Increase the use of assessment information in lesson planning so that work is consistently matched to the needs of individual pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Although standards are below the national average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties, all pupils leave with formal qualifications and many gain several awards. Most pupils gain Entry Level Certificates in a number of subjects and the silver level in the Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Award Scheme. The most able pupils also achieve GCSE passes in science, art and design and design and technology, and pupils with more complex needs meet with success in the ASDAN Towards Independence award. A small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently studying GCSE in English and mathematics through a link with a local mainstream school. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress towards challenging targets. They do well in English and mathematics, and higher and average attaining pupils do exceptionally well in science at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils make good progress overall in all subjects, but occasionally a few higher and lower attaining pupils do less well than they could in lessons because work is not matched closely enough to their very differing needs. Pupils meet with a high level of success in sport: the school recently won the Football Association Charter Standard

Award for special schools nationally. Year 9 girls are currently East of England netball champions for special schools and boys are the champions in football.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They are happy and confident, polite and enthusiastic. Most pupils behave well, they enjoy school and attendance is above average for a school of this type. The school has recently gained Healthy Schools status and pupils are making good progress in their understanding of healthy living, with younger pupils in particular opting for healthy choices. Pupils take part readily in a wide range of sporting activities and take a pride in their achievements. Most pupils feel safe and confident to seek help if they need it and they relate warmly to one another. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. The school council is actively involved in putting forward ideas, has a budget and meets with senior managers to discuss ways of improving the school. Older pupils support younger ones, some have trained as peer mentors, and all pupils are involved in regular charity fundraising. The personal qualities that the school fosters in its pupils and the good progress they make in acquiring basic skills stand them in good stead for the future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the school turns out well-rounded pupils capable of making a positive contribution to society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach and most are very experienced in working with pupils with learning difficulties. They have established good relationships with their pupils and expect them to try their best. Behaviour is usually managed effectively and pupils are keen to learn. Where teaching is good and occasionally outstanding, teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' thinking, and learning is made exciting. Occasionally, in lessons that are well planned overall and good in many other respects, teachers do not make as much use as they should of information about the next steps in learning for individual pupils. A system for diagnosing the needs of individual pupils when they join the school has been introduced, pupils' individual targets are specific and the school has satisfactory methods for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils are given some homework and parents are kept informed about their children's progress but they could be better informed about what their children are learning and how they might help them at home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well overall and the school has appropriately revised its expectations of what pupils will learn in each class in response to the increasing numbers with more complex needs. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and to personal, social and health education. Opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications are good and the school makes effective use of its close links with mainstream schools to extend the chances open to individual pupils. Opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses and to find out about the world of work are satisfactory and developing. All pupils benefit from a wide range of educational visits and from the stimulation that comes from visitors to the school, including a weekly visit by a dance teacher who teaches ballet to pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. The farm unit, which is located in the school grounds - with its sheep, goats, poultry and other animals, vegetable gardens and greenhouses - makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development, to their understanding of living things, and provides a very real opportunity for them to take responsibility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and effective systems are in place to make sure that they are protected. Behaviour is managed well and any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly. The school is an orderly, purposeful place in which pupils feel secure to learn and develop, and their success is celebrated through various rewards and certificates. Strong links with other agencies, including a speech therapist and music therapist, and a qualified counsellor on the school's staff, provide good support for pupils. Close liaison with local colleges, with the Connexions service and the use of external mentors, as well as an established careers programme, support preparation for when pupils move on at 16. Pupils receive satisfactory guidance about how to improve their work and good personal advice. They attend their own annual reviews and are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their progress in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership is good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is supported well in this by other senior staff who have clearly defined responsibilities and a general commitment to do all that they can to meet pupils' needs. Governors make a good contribution to the school's work, some through regular visits to the school and others through the wide range of expertise that they bring. Links with other educational establishments are extensive and the school has productive links with a number of local businesses. It has recently gathered the detailed views of parents and other stakeholders and is using these to improve the school. The management of the school is satisfactory, with scope for further improvement. Managers check the school's

effectiveness regularly on an informal basis and the small minority of inexperienced staff feel very well supported. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring by managers at all levels as part of a system of continuous school improvement. Managers do not observe lessons often enough or regularly sample pupils' work, although they are increasingly using data to find out how much progress pupils are making. Detailed plans have been documented for improving individual subjects but there is no comprehensive whole-school plan for moving the school forward, only a brief list of overall priorities. This has not prevented Weatherfield from providing pupils with a good education because the school has been very effective in retaining a team of long-serving and dedicated staff, and because a great deal of development takes place through discussion that is not documented. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the school is soundly placed to improve further.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school. I am writing now to tell you what I thought about the school. Weatherfield is a good school that helps you to make good progress with your work and to develop as happy, confident individuals. I could see that you get on well together and enjoy learning. The school provides you with good opportunities to take qualifications as you get older and makes sure you are well prepared for moving on to college or work. Teaching is good and the staff really care about you. This helps you to feel safe and encourages you to try hard. The best thing of all about the school - which makes this a very exciting place for you - is the school farm. You are very lucky to have such a wonderful chance to learn how to grow vegetables and to care for the animals. It's a pity that all schools couldn't have a farm just like yours! Your school is led well and the staff want to make it better for you. I have asked the headteacher and the other managers to do this by: - Making sure that teachers always think about the needs of every pupil in the class when they plan your lessons, so that you all make as much progress as you could. - Doing more to check how good the school is, then writing down what they find out and how they plan to improve it. Carry on enjoying your time at Weatherfield and in taking really good care of the animals.