



Lady Zia Wernher School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109745
Local Authority LUTON
Inspection number 288483
Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Ashcroft Road
School category	Community special		Stopsley, Stopsley
Age range of pupils	2–11		Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 9AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 728705
Number on roll (school)	60	Fax number	01582 722384
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Stone
		Headteacher	Mrs D May
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils have severe learning difficulties and their level of knowledge and skills is extremely low when they start school. Many have more profound and multiple learning difficulties than this, which are often associated with complex medical conditions. These pupils are particularly vulnerable; they need constant support and medical care and are at the earliest stage of educational development.

The majority of pupils communicate with gestures or through objects of reference, symbols, signs and electronic aids. While some pupils are independently mobile, others need the aid of a wheelchair and a helper. Nearly half of the pupils are White British and others are mostly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. Pupils come to school from across Luton and some live in areas of high deprivation.

The school has partnerships with a number of other schools and provides them with support for their pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A broad range of related training is also provided by the school to parents, schools and other children's services.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in almost all respects and it is extremely effective in meeting the complex needs of its pupils, which is excellent value for money. Pupils' education is near the best possible. This is brought about by the exemplary fashion in which the school cares for and nurtures its pupils. They are in the best position as they could be for staying safe and healthy and, therefore, they really benefit from opportunities to achieve. The great enjoyment pupils have of school and learning is much encouraged by outstanding learning opportunities. While standards will always be very low because of pupils' learning difficulties, they make excellent progress and achieve enormously in developing important skills and an outlook that enhances their lives. All pupils are being guided and supported in highly expert ways and rapidly increase their capacity to communicate and interact with others. They benefit also from playing a very productive part in, and contributing to, the life of the school. As a result, their personal development is outstanding and together with their exemplary progress they are in the best position possible to cope with the demands they will face in the future.

The very effective staff team combine their substantial expertise and experience so that pupils' global needs are met in as effective way as possible. Teaching and learning throughout the school are outstanding. Provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent. Across the whole school, teachers and their assistants work hard and ensure pupils benefit as much as possible from learning. Their close and continuous assessment of pupils' progress is exceptionally thorough. Therefore, staff know their pupils extremely well. They plan very effectively, identifying accurately the learning outcomes they are seeking. This means classroom activities expertly match pupils' capabilities and provide the right challenges for them to build on what they have already learnt. Resources supporting learning, information and communication technology in particular, are very well developed and used skilfully to aid learning.

The school is led and managed in an exemplary fashion and the expectations shared by all are extremely high. Governors play an excellent role in supporting and encouraging the school's success. Pupils' progress and the work of the school are rigorously monitored. Accurate evaluations of effectiveness lead systematically onto planning priorities for improvements. As a result, the school and its governors have developed an excellent capacity to continue making improvements. The school has excelled in extending its role to other schools and the community by sharing expertise and providing training. A family project worker is strengthening further the links with parents. This is beginning to engage more parents but, at the moment, work continues to involve all parents, especially in eliminating the high level of avoidable absences.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that family project work has sufficient priority and support to impact positively on partnerships with parents and to reduce avoidable absences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils throughout the school achieve extremely well as a result of excellent support and teaching. Expert help is given to each pupil so they are able to take full advantage of learning opportunities, capitalising on their strengths and ensuring they have the correct approach or the specialist equipment they need to succeed. Very close attention to the most essential areas of learning means pupils develop attention skills and increase their capacity to concentrate. They communicate in increasingly sophisticated ways using objects, signs and symbols. They make outstanding progress in lessons because clearly defined learning outcomes give a sharp focus to their work. As the teaching works on a fine appreciation of what is possible as a next step of progress, pupils build extremely well and systematically on what they have already learnt to do.

Superb assessment is used to identify challenging but attainable targets for pupils in their key areas of learning. The progress pupils make towards their targets is rigorously tracked and analysed. This shows pupils make particularly good progress over time.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children in the Foundation Stage have a really good start in school and, like the rest of the pupils, develop great enthusiasm. Most pupils attend regularly when they are well enough, but the school's attendance record is affected by families taking extended holidays in term time. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behaviour is excellent. Their social development is rapid as they become skilled in the use of pictures, symbols, switches and signing to communicate. From an early age, pupils take considerable responsibility and show great initiative. The activities undertaken and the support they get, raises their confidence and self esteem significantly. Pupils are encouraged highly to make choices and influence school life, for example, by communicating their preferences of meals and fruit. Pupils learn how to stay healthy and safe. They adopt healthy lifestyles through regular physical exercise, with the excellent support of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and school nursing services. The high quality and good choice of school meals fully promote healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers, and the good number of classroom assistants supporting them, have a very strong rapport with pupils and always succeed in capturing their interest and holding their attention. Teaching is energetic and lessons

are busy with highly interesting activities. Teachers use electronic whiteboards skilfully to add strong visual reinforcement to teaching and this helps pupils quickly grasp new knowledge and skills. Pupils are taught in imaginative ways which elicits very good responses. Staff make learning fun and often thoroughly enjoyable by using role-play and games. Playing 'What's the time Mr Wolf' at the start of a numeracy lesson had Year 2 pupils bursting with excitement, setting the scene for them to play a full part in learning more about shapes.

Teachers and their assistants work with clear objectives in mind and these are very carefully matched to each pupil's capabilities. Before the end of lessons, pupils are always given good opportunities to go over what they have been learning. This is used very effectively by teachers to confirm what pupils have learnt.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is made highly relevant to the needs of children in the Foundation Stage as well as pupils in the rest of the school. The curriculum is extremely well thought out and interpreted in very imaginative ways to emphasise physical development, communication and independence. Personal, social, and health education permeates all work and activities, placing at the centre the enjoyment of learning and building pupils' confidence and self esteem. The use of information and communication technology and the development of switch technology in particular improves learning opportunities considerably. Pupils' work and activities are broadened with an excellent range of visits and visitors, greatly extending their experiences. The school has outstanding links with many local schools, enabling staff in both settings to share expertise and improve their practice.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. Excellent arrangements for their protection and safeguarding are in place. The strong partnerships with the health trust and other specialist agencies mean pupils' learning difficulties, disabilities and medical needs are being very effectively managed. Pupils are, therefore, in a very good position to take advantage of all the school offers. The family support worker is starting to have a positive impact on reducing avoidable absences.

The staff are extremely committed to pupils' well-being. Support roles are clearly defined and are a comprehensive response to the range of help and resources that pupils need to make progress. A good example is the teacher who has responsibility for assessing how well pupils are able to learn and is skilled in identifying aids and assembling apparatus that makes learning more possible. Teachers and classroom assistants have a very good understanding of how well pupils are learning and plan very effectively what they need to do next as a result of excellent assessment procedures. Individual education plans include clear, achievable targets and these are rigorously pursued in lessons.

Through the Pursuing Perfection initiative the school has also brought parents of disabled children, social services and health service managers together to find ways of improving the support for children and their families. A new booklet is about to be published bringing together for parents the whole range of support that is available.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give a strong and clear direction to school improvement. They are extremely well supported by a fully informed governing body that plays an active part in the school's continuing success and development. Monitoring is thorough and evaluations of the school's work are rigorous and accurate. The quality of teaching has benefited as a result, and is set to continue to improve. Further development of the curriculum, with more emphasis on promoting key skills, is being managed very effectively by expert teams made up of staff and outside specialists.

There is very effective delegation of responsibilities across the school. The whole staff, who possess considerable knowledge and skills, make a significant contribution to the high quality educational provision and improvement. Experience and expertise are shared very effectively with the community by supporting schools and children's services with advice and training. Many families are helped effectively to support their children's development and learning. However, for those who are not closely involved with the school, the benefit is limited.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

14 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Lady Zia Wernher School, Ashcroft Road, Stopsley, Luton LU2 9AY

Thank you for your very warm welcome when we visited your school. We were really pleased to see how happy you all are at school and how well you are making progress.

These are the things we found best about your school:

- it is outstanding in every way it supports you and helps you to learn
- the governors, the headteacher and all of the staff are determined your school will give you the best education there is
- you make excellent progress because you work hard at everything your teachers encourage you to do
- you enthusiastically take part in and thoroughly enjoy all of the activities the school provides
- you all behave exceptionally well and are very kind and helpful to each other
- all of the staff look after you extremely well and keep you safe.

This is what we have asked your teachers to do to improve your school:

- encourage more of your parents to be actively involved with school and especially by helping you avoid any unnecessary days off school.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector