



Littledown School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110188
Local Authority Slough
Inspection number 288595
Inspection date 1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kay Johnson

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Queen's Road |
| School category | Community | | Slough |
| Age range of pupils | 5-12 | | SL1 3QW |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01753 521 734 |
| Number on roll (school) | 15 | Fax number | 01753 575 338 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr George Beaver |
| | | Headteacher | John Walden/Jan Paine (Acting Heads) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 January 2003 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Littledown is a special school for up to 24 pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are currently 15 boys on roll aged between 7 and 11. All pupils have either a statement of special educational need or are under assessment. Most pupils have below average attainment on entry and 86% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils come from the surrounding area of Slough or from neighbouring authorities.

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 which has shown rapid improvement in a relatively short space of time. Due to a period of turbulence in staffing the school made little improvement following the previous inspection. This situation improved in September with the appointment of two experienced senior leaders, as acting headteachers, ably assisted by a seconded full time deputy. Their drive and commitment to implement rigorous self evaluation and robust organisation have led to good recent improvement. As a result of the review by the local authority (LA) the school has moved forward quickly and now provides a satisfactory quality of education.

From the beginning, the leadership team consulted all stakeholders in moving the school forward. By inviting all the parents for individual meetings to support the drive for improving behaviour, they ensured everyone was part of the process. A consistent staff approach has been established, so that there are high expectations, calmness and persistent following up at all times. There has been a sharp reduction in serious behavioural incidents. Nonetheless there is room for further improvement.

A crucial element in this recent improvement has been the focus on learning. By identifying the academic needs of the pupils when they start at the school and sharing good practice, there is consistently satisfactory teaching and learning with some good elements. Some pupils, however, are easily distracted by each other, even though teachers are consistent in setting boundaries for pupils' behaviour. It means that a few individuals do not concentrate for long enough to make better than satisfactory progress. Good elements in teaching are when the teacher has good subject knowledge and can match the work to the pupils' needs accurately. Where it is satisfactory teachers are less confident with the new curriculum and do not plan work that provides the correct challenge for the pupils.

The curriculum has improved a great deal although changes are still at an early stage and have not yet made a full impact on the progress of pupils. There is good planning in place and the content of lessons is found interesting by pupils, such as premier league tables to work out negative numbers, but there is not as much emphasis on developing skills.

Pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Achievement is satisfactory because pupils have met or slightly exceeded their targets. This is also the case when pupils have been tested using the newly introduced assessment system. Standards are exceptionally low because of pupils' complex needs and some have missed large periods of schooling.

A good feature of the school is the care and support it provides through reliable partnerships and a multi agency approach which meets the individual needs of the pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are learning to take more control of their behaviour. With the new assessment and tracking processes in place academic guidance is good but pupils' own evaluation of their progress is still lacking.

Pupils know what it means to be rewarded for their achievements through the encouragement and praise they receive. They are developing their awareness of healthy living and took part in a tasting session with the catering company. As a result most pupils take hot lunches now instead of sandwiches. The school has received the bronze award for healthy eating. The structured playtime activities have ensured that pupils enjoy their leisure time and stay safe.

The evidence clearly indicates that the school is moving forward with a balanced and united momentum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that behaviour continues to improve.
- Ensure that teachers use the new assessment systems so that they can match work more accurately to pupils' needs and help pupils to understand how well they are doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and progress are satisfactory because pupils meet their targets and there is a strong focus on learning. The well presented examples of work in pupils' books show adequate progress and all pupils are appropriately rewarded for their achievements. Standards are exceptionally low because of the pupils' needs. A new tracking system is in place and is being used well to set targets for individual pupils, though it is too early to measure how its use is supporting pupils' progress.

Individual education plans are in place and there is flexibility in the way they are set in order to meet the needs of the pupils. Some pupils are on medication and additional plans are adjusted according to their condition.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well being are satisfactory. 'Only now have I seen a change in my son's behaviour and the difference in his working abilities', reflected a very positive response from parents. Pupils enjoy coming to school as is clear from attendance which has improved since the last inspection. From September records show that serious behavioural incidents have now reduced significantly. Although a few pupils are still finding it difficult to get on with their peers, they understand it is better to take themselves out of class for a few moments to avoid confrontation.

Pupils enjoy the regular awards of certificates for their achievements. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils know about different cultures. They enjoyed an assembly where Indian music was the focus for musical appreciation. Pupils who find it hard to participate fully in assembly are encouraged by staff and this brings a positive response. The school is inclusive because pupils are able to take part in activities in front of their peers and respect each other's achievements. Pupils

show that they can behave sensibly in larger groups, which has been difficult for them in the past.

Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to equip them for future economic well being, as was evident in a mathematics lesson, where balance sheets were being used as a focus. Pupils contribute to the community well, through opportunities such as the recycling project.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good elements. When pupils go into class they know it is for learning. This was clear even in pupils who had to take themselves out of class to calm down, because when they came back in they would immediately get down to work. Teachers insist on appropriate behaviour. They are supported by a team of skilled support staff who know when to intervene and when to step back. Pupils are not involved enough in evaluating their own learning.

Since September training for all staff has focused on approaches such as using positive handling strategies for pupils' behaviour. Staff are calm and use encouraging words and tones to keep pupils focused. Planning of lessons is detailed and where teaching is better than satisfactory, there are some good examples of matching the work to the needs of individual pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and there are some good elements, where planning is detailed and the content is designed to give pupils access to new experiences in learning. Music is an example of this, where the expectation is that pupils have entitlement to learn about aspects such as 'timbre'. This was taught to a challenging group of Year 6 pupils who had clearly retained learning from the previous session. The curriculum is linked more to content than skills and although there are examples of pupils having opportunities in lessons, more emphasis on skills is necessary to prepare them for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There is consistent and flexible multi- agency support from a wide range of providers to support pupils to cope with school life. The school is good at identifying when pupils need specialist help and provide it quickly.

The introduction of better tracking procedures and flexible individual plans are starting to make a positive difference to pupil's behaviour and self esteem. These systems are enabling the school to meet pupils' needs better, although pupils are not as involved

as they could be in evaluating their own progress. The work with families on an individual level has had an impact on the improvement in the behaviour of pupils. Better communication between home and school is another positive outcome. The partnership working between the school and parents has been a key factor in improving behaviour and parents are very supportive and appreciative of the school's efforts.

'The House', which is a small annex to the school, provides a useful base for two pupils who are in a transitional process, where mainstream schools are unable to meet their needs and yet they would not benefit from being in the main school. This provides more flexible support for pupils, which is directly linked to the good practice brought in by the new senior leadership team.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory as a result of the intensive work, which the two acting headteachers have put in since the summer. They have been successful in setting up robust systems for self evaluation and improving the school's organisation. All stakeholders have been consulted in formulating the new school development plan which has the Every Child Matters principles at its core. Staff are clear about their roles and the governors share a common vision for school improvement. The strong foundation which has been laid is a good platform from which to launch new initiatives for supporting mainstream schools. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Staff morale is greatly improved and recruitment issues have been partially resolved, with the appointment of a mixture of experienced qualified teachers and opportunities for skilled and experienced classroom assistants to take on more teaching responsibilities. Teaching together has helped to build confidence and has led to improved behaviour.

The ethos is calm and caring with a clear focus on learning. This shows the balanced approach the leadership team have applied to all aspects of school life. Governance is more robust than previously due to the better self evaluation processes.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| 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 |
| 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 so much for making me welcome when I came to inspect your school. You were polite and I enjoyed talking to members of the school council who told me that you like your school. Your school is making satisfactory progress.

I agree with the staff at the school who say they are making lots of changes and making your school better. They said that the school is safe and encouraging you to learn as much as you can and that is what I saw on the day I visited.

You can help by continuing to try very hard to behave well and work even harder in lessons.

Your school can continue to improve by:

- making sure your behaviour continues to improve
- checking carefully that your work builds on what you have already learned and helping you to understand how well you are doing.

Kay Johnson

Lead inspector