



Cloughwood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111502
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288976
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Stones Manor Lane
School category	Community special		Hartford, Northwich
Age range of pupils	8–18		Cheshire CW8 1NU
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01606 76671
Number on roll (school)	38	Fax number	01606 783486
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs P Booher
		Headteacher	Mr Ian McCready
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2001		

Age group 8–18	Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006	Inspection number 288976
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school makes provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few have additional learning needs. Residential provision is made for five students. There is a recently introduced nurture class for Year 11 students who are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. Very few students are from a minority ethnic background. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Attainment on entry is variable, but overall below average because of the behavioural and emotional difficulties of the students. Many have experienced gaps in their education. Since the last inspection there has been a high turnover of staff, including three different headteachers. The existing headteacher is due to leave at the end of term. A new headteacher has been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school lacks a clear sense of direction, and its analysis of its strengths and weaknesses is poor. Action taken to improve the poor teaching of English and mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4 has been ineffective and standards in these subjects are far too low. Senior managers and governors have been insufficiently involved in setting the school's priorities for improvement. There is a high level of frustration shared by competent teachers and senior managers in the school, who do not consider that they have been well supported. Communication throughout the school is poor and there is a lack of robust systems to ensure that good practice is shared. Governors have carefully monitored the budget but have not been sharp enough in challenging the school about students' underachievement.

Achievement and standards are poor. The 2006 GCSE results were exceptionally low. The teaching of English and mathematics throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 is poor. This impedes students' learning and a significant number of students underachieve in these subjects. Staffing difficulties have been a contributory factor to this underachievement. However, the lack of a system to track students' progress and inform planning to raise achievement makes this situation even worse. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in reading and writing when taught in the learning support department. They regress again in mainstream classes because systems are not in place to ensure continuity in the provision they need to sustain good progress. There are pockets of good teaching in science, art and physical education, but overall the quality of teaching and learning is poor throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Good teachers and senior managers currently work in isolation and long to be part of an effective team. However, provision in Key Stage 2 is good. The pupils in this key stage are taught well and make good progress. The Year 11 students in the nurture class have settled to structured routines, and as they gain in confidence and self-esteem, they begin to develop an interest in learning.

Students' personal development and well-being are poor and the curriculum is inadequate. Students' physical fitness is developed well but there is not a consistent approach to developing their emotional well-being. A successful emphasis is placed on encouraging students to adopt a safe lifestyle. Students' spiritual development is poor and insufficient attention is paid to raising their awareness of cultural diversity. Throughout the school care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Given their challenging needs, students' behaviour is satisfactory overall. However, lack of skilful behaviour management and appropriate supervision on the part of some teachers and teaching assistants triggers poor behaviour in very vulnerable students and contributes to far too many exclusions. This causes huge anger and frustration on the part of the vast majority of staff who work hard to help these students improve their behaviour.

Attendance is poor and the school has not undertaken an analysis to establish patterns of absence. Students enjoy good lessons but switch off and become bored by those where too many worksheets are used. There are a number of statutory infringements in the curriculum. Students do not receive their entitlement to citizenship and religious education in the secondary department. The vocational curriculum is too fragmented, teachers are not clear about what they should be doing in its delivery, and it provides too few opportunities for students to gain accreditation for their efforts. The school provides poor value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Leadership and management and the quality of care in the residential provision are good. A recent report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection recognised that almost all of the national minimum standards of care were met. Since then the head of care has ensured that all parents are made aware of the correct procedures should they wish to make a complaint. Relationships between students and care staff are good. Students in residence have well established routines, are happy and say that they are well cared for. They are treated with dignity, have good accommodation, and feel safe. They enjoy the curriculum they experience in the evenings more than their lessons in school. They have a quiet place to do their homework, but do not find it challenging enough. Care staff support students in joining in community life in the evenings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards in English, mathematics and religious education for students throughout the secondary department by ensuring good quality of teaching and learning in these subjects.
- Develop and implement a whole-school system for tracking students' progress and monitor its use to raise students' achievement.
- Analyse the patterns of poor attendance and take decisive action to improve it.
- Conduct an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and involve all of the senior team and governors in whole-school planning to raise achievement.
- Improve communication and ensure that systems are established to share good practice throughout the school.
- Ensure that opportunities are provided through the curriculum to promote students' spiritual development, raise their awareness of cultural diversity and promote their emotional well-being.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met in the provision for citizenship and religious education.
- Develop and implement a robust and coherent vocational curriculum linked to relevant opportunities for students' work to be accredited.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 students make poor progress in English and mathematics and standards are too low. GCSE results in 2006 in English and mathematics were poor. Achievement is unsatisfactory in religious education in Key Stage 3, and throughout the secondary department students do not do well enough in the humanities. Due to the commitment of individual teachers, there is satisfactory achievement in individual subjects, such as science, art and design and physical education; this is in spite of the lack of a system to track students' progress as they move through the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress with their reading and writing while taught in the learning support department. However, this good progress is not sustained throughout the school because there is no system to ensure that the good work carried out by this department feeds effectively into mainstream classes. Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress because their teacher ensures that their learning builds step by step. A few reach standards close to those expected nationally for pupils of their age. The provision for Year 11 students in the nurture class ensures that these students get a good start in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is inadequate. When lessons are interesting and challenging students enjoy their learning; when teaching is dull they become frustrated and angry. Behaviour is satisfactory, considering the challenging behaviour associated with the students' needs. Poor behaviour management and lack of appropriate supervision from time to time trigger poor behaviour and contribute to an excessively high number of exclusions. Attendance is poor. Strategies to improve it are not sufficiently based on the causes of the poor attendance. Insufficient thought has gone into planning to promote students' spiritual development. Art and design contributes to students' awareness of cultural diversity but this is not promoted across the school. Students understand the dangers associated with unprotected sex and substance misuse, and the importance of keeping physically fit and eating a balanced diet. But insufficient and inconsistent attention is paid to developing their emotional health. When approached sensitively and with dignity, the vast majority of students respond with maturity and good humour. Students express their views through the school council, but too many feel that even so there are a few teachers who never listen to them because they have become labelled as 'bad children'. This is upsetting for the vast majority of teachers, who consider that they have been let down by poor leadership; this results in a spiralling cycle of unhappiness within the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall. It is consistently poor in English and mathematics throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. It is poor in religious education in Key Stage 3. Activities are not matched to students' needs, are too often dull and lack challenge. In these lessons there is far too little learning and students make poor progress. Teaching assistants are not effectively deployed to manage poor behaviour. On occasions totally unacceptable remarks made by some students irritate those who are trying to learn, but they go unchallenged by staff. Work is inconsistently marked and homework is undemanding. There are pockets of good teaching. Key Stage 2 pupils are well taught and enthused to learn. Those with additional learning needs are taught very well in the learning support department, but this quality is not continued through the school for these pupils. Good relationships have been established between Year 11 students in the nurture class and their teacher and teaching assistant. However, during the inspection a lesson which had the potential to be good for these students was wrecked by the sudden intervention of a student who should have been supervised in another class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. The vocational programme lacks clarity and cohesion. It provides too few opportunities for the students to gain accreditation for their work. Statutory requirements are not met. There is no provision for citizenship, except in the nurture group. Key Stage 4 students are not taught religious education. Insufficient attention is given to therapy being integral to the curriculum to build students' confidence and self-esteem. There is an innovative and imaginative curriculum in Key Stage 2. Planned effectively, it is well matched to pupils' needs. Individual learning programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, but insufficient use is made of them throughout the school. There are strengths in the curriculum for art and design, science and physical education. A suitable programme has been planned for Year 11 students in the nurture group. It provides them with the skills required to enter the workforce. A good range of clubs and outdoor activities makes a valuable contribution to students' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

On balance, the quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Links with a range of external agencies support students satisfactorily, except that response to referrals made to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is sometimes slower than the school would like. Support from the careers service is very good. Students say that they feel safe in school and have an adult they trust. However,

they say, 'Some teachers think we never tell the truth because they hold on to the bad things we have done in the past.' Procedures for child protection are robust. Risk assessments are thorough. The lack of a system for tracking students' progress through the school is a serious deficiency because it impedes planning to raise achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. Self-evaluation is poor. Action taken to address the poor teaching in English and mathematics has been ineffective. Poor communication causes frustration among teachers and has an adverse impact on their work. Capable senior managers and governors are insufficiently involved in whole-school planning. Nonetheless, pockets of practice within the school are good and well managed. For example, the learning support department is well managed, but there are no systems to ensure that the good work done by this department is carried through the school. Key Stage 2 and the residential provision are also managed effectively. The governing body is under-strength and this impedes its effectiveness. It oversees the budget satisfactorily but has not sufficiently challenged the school's underperformance.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
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	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I enjoyed talking with you. Once you settled and felt confident you showed me just how mature you can be, how keen you are to do well, and how frustrated you are by some of your experiences at school. I appreciated the sense of humour some of you showed me.

These are the good aspects of Cloughwood School.

- The good teaching and progress in Years 5 and 6.
- The support that those of you who find reading and writing difficult are given when you visit the learning support department.
- The high quality of care those of you who are in residence experience from your care workers.
- The fact that some of you in Year 11 (in the nurture class), who had given up on school, are beginning to learn again.

However, your school needs extra help, known as 'special measures', to ensure that you receive everything you are entitled to. Another inspector will come to check that your school does all of the following to make it a better place to learn.

- Improve teaching and learning in English, mathematics and religious education in the secondary department and help you do much better in these subjects.
- Provide a better and more vocational education for you, and ensure that you are all taught citizenship and religious education.
- Check how well you are doing regularly and give you better pointers to improve your work.
- Ensure that communication is good through the school, that your views are taken seriously, and that the school is there to support you in becoming rounded young people who are confident to find a job when you leave school.
- Do more to improve your confidence, encourage more of you to attend school more regularly, and make sure that it is an exciting place that makes you eager to learn.
- Never give up on you because of the mistakes you may have made in the past and always hold on to the belief that you can all succeed.
- Help you grow spiritually and to understand and respect the beliefs of others.

In return, you need to show respect to your teachers and help create an atmosphere where the school works together to make learning challenging, exciting and fun for everyone so that you can go on to do great things with your lives.