



Catcote School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111784
Local Authority Hartlepool
Inspection number 289048
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Noreen Buckingham

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Catcote Road
School category	Community special		Hartlepool
Age range of pupils	11–19		TS25 4EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01429 264036
Number on roll (school)	43	Fax number	01429 234452
Number on roll (6th form)	30		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Colin Rowntree
		Headteacher	Mr Robin Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	11–12 October 2006	289048

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a community special school for secondary aged students who have a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities. These are mainly severe or profound learning difficulties, and an increasing number have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Each of the students has a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all students are White British. The school has earned a number of national awards including Investors in People, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark Gold, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and Healthy School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The students are the focus of everything the school does. Parents value highly the care and support given to their children, and comment very favourably on the improvements they have seen in their children since starting Catcote. One parent wrote, 'It is a magnificent school where children are happy and well cared for and in the hands of staff who are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure this.'

From a low start all students, regardless of their age, gender or learning difficulty and disability make good progress and achieve well. Older students succeed in gaining nationally accredited certificates. Consistent assessment procedures are evolving well and students' progress is tracked via progression files. However, because there is no consistent system across the school for analysing what the students achieve, differences in their progress are not picked up and acted upon to raise achievement even higher.

Students' achievements and their enjoyment of learning result from good teaching. Teachers have high expectations and employ a range of teaching styles to enable students to work independently and together. Teachers draw on a variety of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), and use strategies such as role-play to develop understanding of real life situations. A good curriculum and a wide range of work-related learning support the development of students' confidence and helps them to blossom into mature young people. Added to this is the wide variety of out of school clubs, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which effectively promotes personal development.

Staff have very good relationships with students and this has a very positive spin off in the classroom and in pupils' personal development. One student said, 'We all have someone we can talk to.' Students feel safe and secure and this is reflected in the way they behave and in their positive attitudes in lessons.

Underpinning this success is the hard work and determination of the headteacher. The school's leadership and management are good overall and the headteacher's leadership is outstanding. He has developed and encouraged a highly effective and experienced senior leadership team who provide good role models for management and teaching. Six recently appointed middle managers are confident and ready to take on their new challenges and are to be congratulated on what they have achieved so far. They and all other staff show a strong and common determination to move the school forward. The governing body, whilst fully supporting everything the school does, does not yet check how well it is progressing.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school seeks and acts on the views of everyone involved with the school, not least those of the students themselves.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The quality of education for learners in the sixth form is good overall with some outstanding aspects, for example, the curriculum. Work-related learning plays a big part in the learners' education and provides many opportunities for them to grow and mature into confident young people. Everything the learners do carries with it some form of accreditation and they leave feeling valued and armed with a range of practical skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment is analysed consistently to help to raise achievement even further.
- Ensure that the governing body plays a more active part in checking the school's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Starting from a low base, the great majority of students achieve well and make good progress. Staff want students to succeed and do everything they can to make learning interesting and enjoyable. Good teaching and teamwork in the classroom is crucial to this.

Everything that older students study carries with it some form of recognised accreditation. As the curriculum widens, so does the range of accreditation. OCR Entry Level, National Skills Profile, CLAIT, qualifications in Food Hygiene, Office Practice and hairdressing feature among the broad range of worthwhile qualifications that the students achieve. The teachers use the students' individual education and curriculum plans effectively to ensure that the students are making the progress the teachers expect of them. However, an insufficiently rigorous analysis of data fails to highlight where students could make even better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The personal development of the sixth-form learners is outstanding. They develop independence, confidence and maturity, for example, through serving on the school council or as a prefect, and through work-related learning. Because of this, and because of the range of qualifications that they achieve, the students are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. They respond well to the points system which gives them a positive incentive to behave well and work hard. As a result, their behaviour is good

and students say they like coming to school and enjoy learning. Attendance is what is usual for this type of school and the great majority of absences are due to medical reasons.

Students have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and take part in a wide range of sporting and physical activities. Raising money for charities increases students' awareness of the needs of others and how they can make a positive contribution to society. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; although the students' understanding of the diversity of modern British culture is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and some lessons are outstanding. The teaching assistants work extremely well with teachers and all adults have positive relationships with students. Praise is used effectively to maintain students' concentration and effort and supports a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Students enjoy their learning because they find lessons interesting; for example, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is effective and actively engages them. Evidence of teachers' good understanding of individual needs is seen in their planning and most lessons have a clear focus. A mix of independent and group tasks keeps students engaged and working hard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good overall and is well matched to the students' needs. In the sixth form, the partnership with other schools and agencies is excellent. The 14 to 19 curriculum is outstandingly good and provides an exceptionally broad range of work-related learning experience and students enjoy a variety of work placements. Parents say that they are very impressed with this aspect of the school's work. The students make well-informed choices from, for example, the school's hair and beauty salon, horticulture and a parent-and-toddler group. The school's coffee shop is a resounding success. The extended school programme gives all students the chance to learn new skills and a 'healthy options' afternoon gives students great opportunities to experience a wide range of physical activities. The school recognises that the overall time given for teaching is a little below the national average but has plans to remedy this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good overall. Students are safe and secure in the school and always have someone to talk to if they feel worried. Very positive relationships between all staff and students help to make the school the happy place it is. Students are valued and respected and they respond by being polite and well mannered. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and comment, 'Staff show great skill and sensitivity when managing our daughters' complex needs.'

Arrangements for safeguarding everyone's health and welfare are robust. The academic guidance that students are given is good and they are aware of their targets, discussing them at weekly pastoral sessions. Strong partnerships with outside agencies ensure access to all relevant information. Students' progress is tracked via progression files and while a small group of specific pupils are tracked and monitored against targets and the curriculum, the lack of a consistent analysis of all pupils' progress means that some staff do not have the most accurate view of how to raise students achievements further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership and management are good overall and the good improvement since the last inspection has been due mainly to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. The development of a team of middle managers alongside a strong and experienced senior leadership team provides a firm base on which to build and, because they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, they are in a good position to make improvements. All staff, from the site manager to the headteacher, show a keen commitment to the school. The focus on students, their achievement, and how best to meet their needs, is at the heart of what they do and this is why students like the school so much. The professional development of all staff is seen as a high priority, not only for their own personal development but to ensure the changing needs of students can be effectively met. The school improvement plan defines targets related well to the national Every Child Matters agenda, but a sharper focus on the most important targets would give the school a clearer pointer to improvement. Whilst governors are very supportive of the school and make frequent visits, these are not sufficiently focused on monitoring the work of the school to check progress in specific areas. Good improvements have been made to the accommodation, making the school very welcoming and a positive learning environment.

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
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	2	
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

Catcote School

Catcote Road

Hartlepool

TS25 4EZ

13 October 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school and for making my job so enjoyable. I found it interesting to talk with you and hear your thoughts about the school which happily were the same as mine. The cheese scones in the coffee shop are yummy, thank you!

I think Catcote is a good school and some of the work is outstanding. All staff care about you very much and want you to do well. They work hard to help you, and you are right when you say that all staff are approachable and you always have someone to speak to if there's a problem. I think the options you have to choose from are really very good and give you the skills you will need when you leave school. The fact that you like coming to school and enjoy what you do showed me what sensible and mature young people you are turning into. Your headteacher does an excellent job in running your school and the senior staff he has to help him are also keen to make sure you are happy and learning as much as you can.

There are couple of things I think could improve your school a bit more. I have asked the headteacher and teachers to look very closely at your progress and make better use of the information there is to see if you can make even better progress. I've also asked the governors to come and see you when you are in school so that they know what is happening and can find out how much progress is being made.

You can be proud of your school and help it to stay that way by keeping up your good work. Well done!

Yours sincerely

Noreen Buckingham

Lead inspector