



# Peak School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 113039  
**Local Authority** DERBYSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 289490  
**Inspection dates** 22–23 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Susan Aldridge

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Buxton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Chinley, Chinley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19		High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 6ES
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01663 750324
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	35	<b>Fax number</b>	01663 751359
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Gregory
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Scowcroft
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 February 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small residential special school that caters for pupils with a range of severe or profound learning difficulties, including autism. Over half exhibit challenging behaviour. There are currently no pupils in the Foundation Stage and only three pupils of primary age; nine pupils are in residence. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are White and of British heritage; very few have other ethnic origins. There are twice as many boys as girls. Few pupils are in public care, and pupils come from a range of socio-economic circumstances. The school provides an outreach service to mainstream schools. Its provision for sport and physical activities has been recognised by the Activemark award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Peak School is a good school that provides good value for money and this is how it sees itself. It provides a high standard of education and care, knows well where its strengths lie and what it needs to do to improve further, because its self-evaluation is good; it is well led and managed. The headteacher provides excellent leadership in setting the tone for the school as one where the well-being of each pupil includes the well-being of their families. The school works exceptionally well with families and external agencies to provide packages of support that meet individual needs, and this leads to a very high level of parental satisfaction with the school's work. Most parents returned completed questionnaires, and several wrote of the caring and dedicated staff; one noted that, as a result of their support, 'We now have a good family life'.

The school successfully meets pupils' needs. Although standards are exceptionally low this is entirely the result of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Good progress is associated with good teaching and learning, a wide range of learning experiences that meet individual needs well, and the high standards of care and support provided in a most effective partnership with external agencies. Skilled staff work well as a team to help pupils learn and they are well supported by clear guidance in several policies and by monitoring and support of senior managers. However, there is no overarching policy on teaching and learning, and staff have not agreed what constitutes good or outstanding teaching at their school. As a result, there are a few inconsistencies in practice.

Pupils' personal development is good. They clearly feel safe and secure in school and enjoy lessons and activities. They make a sound contribution to the community. Those with challenging behaviour make good progress in reducing negative aspects of their behaviour. This is because staffing levels are good and staff are well trained to manage difficult behaviour; there are also good arrangements to encourage improvement. They learn to make choices, such as eating food which is healthy and take part enthusiastically in a wide range of physical and sporting activities. They have satisfactory awareness of the world of work. They are well prepared for future life.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. In particular, the residence now meets almost all of the care standards; only the premises fall short of the required standard. There has been a good improvement in the school building, with the addition of new classrooms, a staffroom and meeting areas. However, the hall remains unsuitable for physical education for secondary pupils and primary pupils are taught in a bungalow separate from the main school, which reduces their social contact with others. The school has suitable plans for new buildings, and a hydrotherapy pool is currently being built. It has also developed an outreach service which supports pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. This service is valued by staff in schools and by the local authority. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The residential provision is good; it is well led and managed. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report of November 2006 acknowledges high standards of care and welfare. With the exception of those relating to the premises, all care standards were met and several were exceeded. There are suitable plans for the building of new residential accommodation when funding from identified sources becomes available. Close liaison with school staff, parents and external agencies leads to high parental satisfaction and good provision of support for pupils and their families. Well-trained staff and good teamwork ensure that care is good. Residential provision makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development as they develop their personal care and independence skills and have good social lives; a wide range of enjoyable evening activities gets pupils out into the community, develops their interests and encourages participation in physical activities.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Agree a teaching and learning policy for the school and use the criteria in this for monitoring teaching and learning.
- Improve the residential and teaching accommodation to rectify the outstanding weaknesses.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

When pupils enter the school their knowledge and skills are well below those expected for their age and they remain very low because of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties. However, all pupils make equally good progress and the school is able to demonstrate this clearly because it makes effective use of the assessment information that it collects and the comparative information that it has. Although the school sets whole-school targets to raise achievement, these are not a useful indicator of its success, as numbers of pupils are so small, and a single pupil can make a big difference. It is in their individual targets that pupils are seen to make good progress, as well as gains in P levels (Pre-National Curriculum Level 1). The school development plan identifies the need to improve pupils' progress in writing. Where pupils do not make the progress expected of them, the school can explain this convincingly; for instance, where pupils have had extended periods of illness or a deteriorating medical condition.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. Their behaviour is good. Those with challenging behaviour, often referred because their previous placements have been unsuccessful, make good improvements in their time at the school. This is because they are well

managed and well supported by skilled staff. Attendance is also good; almost all absences are the result of illness or medical appointments. Pupils clearly enjoy school and feel safe and secure there. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They form good relationships with adults and develop a suitable means of communicating with others; a few form friendships. They learn to understand their feelings and emotions, and to enjoy music, art and drama. Older pupils know their likes and dislikes and develop realistic ideas about what they will do when they leave school. Pupils take part in a wide range of physical activities and are beginning to make healthy food choices or widen the range of foods they will eat. They take on a satisfactory range of responsibilities at school, although occasionally adults do things for them that they could do themselves. Pupils work together safely and sensibly and help others by collecting for charities or taking part in mini-enterprise activities. They leave school well prepared for the next step.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff are skilled; they know pupils well, and use assessment information effectively to plan suitable individual learning objectives for pupils in lessons. They plan practical, relevant and enjoyable tasks, then carefully record pupils' progress. Lessons are calm and purposeful because staff manage pupils well and have good relationships with them. Pupils are almost always co-operative; they understand well-established routines and feel secure with these. Teaching assistants are well briefed and deployed to support individual pupils; they help to keep pupils focused and engaged. Teachers use a good range of methods to support pupils' understanding, such as visual timetables, sensory approaches and symbols with text. Most staff are competent Makaton signers, but signing is not consistently good across the school. Staff give good praise and feedback to pupils, and a few involve pupils well in reviewing learning in lessons. A good dialogue is maintained with parents and residential staff through home/school books so that pupils can continue to acquire skills at home or in residence.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum meets pupils' diverse needs well, whilst ensuring that they receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum and religious education. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced an externally accredited course, designed with the development of pupils' coping and independence skills in mind. The first group will be assessed in Summer 2007. A good programme of personal, social, health education and citizenship, recently strengthened by the addition of activities designed to encourage pupils' social and emotional awareness, supports pupils' personal development well. The oldest pupils attend a local college one day each week, and they thoroughly enjoy this. The school improvement plan identifies the need to widen

opportunities for work experience and improve the accommodation to extend learning opportunities. The curriculum is well enriched; a wide range of visits, visitors, trips out of school and themed weeks help to bring learning to life in school and increase social opportunities in the residence. There is a particularly good range of physical activities on offer.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. This is a school where not only every child matters, but every family matters too. Staff literally 'go the extra mile' to support pupils and their families. For instance, clinics are held on the school site where possible, and staff will accompany pupils and parents to medical or dental appointments elsewhere to provide continuity of support. There are very good relationships with external agencies and through these the school ensures that pupils have access to additional support when it is available. Pupils' safety is assured in school by careful risk assessment, suitable action to minimise risks, good levels of supervision and rigorous procedures for recruiting and training staff. Child protection matters have a high profile. Staff strive to give pupils a voice and help them to understand their rights. Teaching and residential staff have produced an 'advocacy booklet' for each pupil in residence and the school is piloting a means of more meaningful involvement of pupils in their transition reviews. Where appropriate, pupils are involved in annual reviews, but not all who are capable of doing so are routinely involved in charting their progress towards targets set. However, a few older pupils know what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's clear vision for the school is clearly articulated and shared by staff and governors. Other staff with whole-school responsibilities provide good leadership too. The deputy headteacher collects and analyses assessment data well. The outreach services and residential settings are both well led and managed, and both are highly valued by those they serve. Good opportunities for training and development ensure that staff are skilled in meeting pupils' needs. There is satisfactory guidance for teachers, in a range of policies, about aspects of teaching and learning. However, there is not a clear direction on how to move teaching from good to outstanding, as there is no teaching and learning policy. Monitoring and evaluation are successful in diagnosing the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the school improvement plan identifies all the key areas for development. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are a most supportive group who have relevant skills and expertise. They are developing their strategic role.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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
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**

24 January 2007

Dear Pupils

The Peak School, Buxton Road, Chinley, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK23 6ES

Thank you for making me welcome at your school. I came to see how well you are all getting on and find out what could make your school better.

I enjoyed my visit. Your school is a good school. Your parents are very pleased with the school. They say that it helps you and your families. That is good, because it is what Mrs Scowcroft wants the school to be good at. People at your school work hard with lots of other people to make sure that you get the help you need.

You are all getting on well with your work at school and in the way that you grow up and become young adults. This is because your teachers and teaching assistants are doing a good job. You also have enjoyable lessons, lots of visits out and things to do in the evenings in residence. The people at school and in residence take good care of you too.

Mrs Scowcroft and the staff are going to do two main things. They are going to find ways of making lessons even better. They already have plans for new buildings for the school and the residence and when they have got the money, these will be built.

I hope that you will all keep up the good work.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead Inspector