



Winchelsea Special School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113955
Local Authority Poole
Inspection number 289766
Inspection date 7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Guernsey Road
School category	Community special		Parkstone
Age range of pupils	3-16		Poole BH12 4LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 746240
Number on roll (school)	93	Fax number	01202 733024
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	J W Brown
		Headteacher	Stephen Cook
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All have statements of special educational needs. The school serves the local authority (LA) of Poole and a high proportion of pupils come from families who are receiving benefits; only a few are from ethnic minorities. Increasingly, pupils are being admitted with additional and complex needs, such as those associated with autism. Since the last inspection the LA has debated the future of the school, and this has now been resolved. The headteacher was appointed in April 2005 but all other senior leaders hold 'acting' appointments. A deputy headteacher has been appointed and is due to start in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Winchelsea School is a satisfactory school, which cares a great deal for all of the pupils. The good care, guidance and support pupils receive means that good progress is made in improving personal and social skills. In this, pupils are helped by the strong relationships they have with staff that allow them to feel comfortable and safe at school and to know that they are respected as young people. As a result, pupils enjoy school. Consequently, they attend regularly, behave well and work hard to please their teachers.

The school has been through a period of uncertainty but the headteacher has been successful in establishing procedures that provide a solid base for developing the school. These include improving planning for learning and this has ensured that teaching is satisfactory. As a result, pupils' achievements are satisfactory, despite their attainment being below that expected for their age because of their special educational needs. From a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage, they continue to make satisfactory progress through to Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress. They achieve passes in an appropriate range of nationally accredited awards and, with the help of the very close links with the local college and specific programmes to develop life skills, are prepared well for life after school. In the majority of lessons teachers ensure that all pupils, regardless of the cause and severity of their learning difficulties, progress at the same rate. However, in some lessons, most often taught by teachers with limited specialist subject knowledge, planning is not always good enough to ensure that learning is always relevant. This is because they do not receive sufficient support from subject leaders and, as a result, some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

The headteacher has made a good start but, overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Although developing well, the procedures for assessing the progress pupils make are not yet sufficiently precise and, as a result, some subject leaders do not have a clear enough picture of how well pupils are doing in each of the subjects. At present, much of the responsibility for moving the school forward rests with the headteacher. However, with a more certain future ahead, staff are keen to take on more responsibilities and are looking forward to the challenge of developing the school. Governors provide good support to the headteacher, for example, by taking effective action to strengthen the senior management team. They have worked hard in trying to improve the accommodation, which prevents aspects of some subjects, such as physical education and science, from being taught on site. The small size and awkward shape of many of the classrooms make teaching and learning challenging. These factors weaken the curriculum and limit the range of strategies teachers can use to support pupils' different learning needs. However, despite these factors, the curriculum is good overall because of the effective way leavers are prepared for the next stage of their education and the interesting range of additional activities which provide good support for pupils' personal and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of assessment to enable the senior leaders to have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by developing the role of the subject leaders, especially in providing support and advice to other teachers.
- Improve the accommodation to enable the school to fully teach all subjects on site and to ensure it is better suited to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards pupils attain are below those expected for their age because of their learning difficulties. Achievement is satisfactory for children in the Foundation Stage and they make good progress in their social and communication skills. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 make satisfactory progress against the learning targets set for them. They make good progress in English and science and in the food studies and resistant materials elements of design and technology. The school has recognised that pupils' progress in mathematics, although satisfactory, could be better and has taken effective action to promote improvement. Pupils do not make equivalent progress over all aspects of some subjects, especially physical education, because of the limitations of the accommodation. Pupils with additional special needs make the same progress as their peers because staff are very good at minimising the effect of difficulties with the accommodation on teaching and learning. For example, pupils with autism do as well as the other pupils even though the small size of classrooms does not allow them to work away from others.

For the last two years, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been successful against their targets for learning and this shows in their good performance over an appropriate range of accredited awards. For example, last year's pupils did well in the Assessment and Qualification Authority (AQA) award scheme, the ASDAN Bronze/Silver award and at the entry level certificate at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy lessons, concentrate hard and listen carefully to their teachers and teaching assistants. Attendance is good, and parents are quick to say how keen their children are to come to school. From the time they start in the Reception class children learn what is expected of their behaviour. They are confident that they will not be bullied and feel safe because of this. They have a good understanding of the need to live and eat healthily and enjoy the new 'healthy options' provided at lunchtime. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular, pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong, think deeply about how their actions affect others and show a good knowledge of different cultures. They are keen to take responsibility,

and members of the school council are proud of the improvements they have helped bring about, particularly in the provision of more interesting playground equipment. Older pupils show good levels of maturity and are sensible when choosing college courses to follow. Involvement in projects such as the mini-enterprise scheme, which this year resulted in the making of goods to sell at parents' meetings, helps prepare them well for their futures. Sales were very good and pupils learned a great deal about managing a budget and keeping records.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory; teaching is good in a sizeable minority of lessons, because teaching assistants are deployed well and make an important contribution to pupils' progress by skilfully using pictures, signs and symbols, and following well the procedures of specialist teaching approaches, such as the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH). Throughout the school teachers are confident in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and their good use of the interactive whiteboards helps them make learning easier and more interesting. In some subjects, notably English, learning is made particularly relevant to all pupils because teachers use the developing assessment procedures well and plan tasks to ensure that new learning is built on previous learning. Targets are set clearly and are known to pupils, who gain from helping judge whether these have been met or not. Pupils enjoy working hard and learning is fun; one said, 'I work as hard as I can because I know that I am learning things'. However, this is not the case in all lessons and some teachers do not always plan well enough to enable all pupils to meet their learning targets. This is especially the case when they teach lessons in the subjects in which they have little specialist knowledge.

Classrooms are too small and are awkwardly shaped. Although teachers make the best of the space available, it limits the strategies they are able to use in supporting learning, especially as the range of pupils' learning needs in any lesson can be very wide.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets national requirements and pupils' additional needs and provides a good range of accredited awards. It has an appropriate focus, to develop literacy and numeracy and the skills of independence. It is particularly successful in Years 10 and 11. Older pupils benefit from the regular visits they make to the local college to take part in taster and awareness courses, to familiarise themselves with college life and to help choose the courses they wish to follow. As a result, almost all pupils leave Year 11 prepared well enough to continue their education in college.

The good way in which the curriculum is extended provides many benefits. The effective links with other schools, for example, provide chances for pupils to visit and to take lessons with mainstream pupils and to join with them in performances at Harvest, Easter and Christmas times and frequently for other events throughout the year. In addition to this opportunity, which pupils greatly enjoy, the many lunchtime and after-school clubs and the holiday club add breadth and richness to pupils' learning experiences, besides providing very meaningful opportunities to develop personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are rigorous and all staff have pupils' welfare very much at heart. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are good and ensure that pupils are well cared for. Parents are delighted with the level of care, support and guidance and the effect it has on their children. One parent commented, 'I can't believe the transformation in my son. He loves school now and his behaviour has improved beyond our wildest dreams'.

Small teaching groups ensure that staff are able to provide good support through good use of assessment, even when the range of learning needs is considerable. This is particularly evident in subjects such as English and science. However, the school is not able at this time to use this information to judge the progress made by different groups of pupils or to recognise the quality of the progress against that of equivalent pupils in other schools.

The specific requirements of pupils with language, visual and physical difficulties are met well through the work of a wide range of specialist visitors. The outreach programme, through which staff provide support and advice to pupils and teachers in mainstream schools, is well respected and growing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

This is an exciting time for the school. After a period of uncertainty caused by the LA's debate on the future of the school, staff morale is high and teachers are enthusiastic about accepting increasing responsibility, including improving leadership in the subjects. At present, the headteacher is the main guiding force for the school and is well supported by the governing body. The good procedures developed by the headteacher and his expectation for rigour in the work of all staff are beginning to show in improvements seen over all the school. Currently, leaders have a satisfactory knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. The school, though, knows that it needs to continue to develop and refine the new procedures for recognising progress, which are intended to provide a rich database to help judge the effectiveness of the school. Plans are well advanced to provide a stronger senior management team in order to continue the good start the headteacher has made. As a result, there is a secure and satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

The governors and LA recognise how the accommodation imposes difficulties on the work of the school and the LA has identified areas for improvement. Inspectors agree with the key issues identified in the LA's suitability survey and recognise that unless these are met the work of the school will continue to be constrained.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	2
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

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	2
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	2
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

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for talking with us and for helping us find out about your school. We think the school provides you with a satisfactory education and we hope you will continue to work hard at your learning. We were impressed with:

- The way you develop as young people, the good way you behave, your friendliness to each other and to visitors.
- The care and support given to you by the staff, who are quick to help you when you need help or are troubled by something.
- The oldest pupils especially learn what is right for them and we know this because almost all leave school to continue learning at college.
- The good way in which the headteacher and staff make sure that the school is a safe and comfortable place to be where you can work hard but have fun and enjoyment also.
- The headteacher has made a good start and with the support of other senior staff he is determined to continue to improve the school.

We have asked the school to improve the following:

- The way in which information on the progress you make is used to plan lessons and to judge how good the school is.
- That subject leaders provide greater help to other teachers who are teaching their subjects.
- The accommodation, to make teaching and learning easier.