



Elemore Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114337
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289880
Inspection date 13 February 2007
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	Pittington
School category	Community special		Durham, County Durham
Age range of pupils	11–16		DH6 1QD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 3720275
Number on roll (school)	70	Fax number	0191 3721529
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Michael Walsh
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Royle
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	13 February 2007	289880

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Elemore Hall is a residential school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Of the pupils currently on roll only four are girls. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. All have statements of special educational need and attainment on entry is low. This may be due to previous low attendance or periods of exclusions. Twenty-five boys are boarders and seven pupils are looked after by the local authority. Many pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and the school works with a wide range of agencies to support them and their families. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties. The school has the Heartbeat 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 which offers its pupils a good education. Following a period of change, the leadership and management are now settled and work well as a team. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school and is totally committed to seeing this vision come to fruition. The school has a child-centred approach with a learning focus at the heart. Clear roles and responsibilities for all managers means that different departments, for example, boarding provision, are well run. The impact of the most recent managerial appointments is just developing but all know what is required. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the school gives good value for money. Senior managers know the school well and what needs to be done to make it even better. Governors are supportive and many are relatively new; as yet, they are not involved actively enough in the school to give them a sufficiently informed view of its strengths and weaknesses.

The majority of pupils achieve well and are successful in a range of externally accredited examinations. This shows good progress considering their low starting points. However, writing remains a weakness because pupils do not routinely have opportunities to write in all areas of the curriculum. Low attendance by a few pupils means that their achievement is only satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good which results in good achievement and progress for the majority of pupils. Assessment systems are inconsistent across subjects and relate mainly to what is to be studied next rather than individual learning needs. This means that there is insufficient data about how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve their skills. This in turn impinges on the tracking of progress although teachers do track progress through GCSE modules.

Relationships between all adults and pupils are good and this not only supports learning in the classroom but also pupils' personal development throughout the day. Staff are successful in helping most pupils overcome significant barriers to learning and the introduction of the Learning Credit scheme makes a strong contribution in encouraging pupils to learn. Pupils really enjoy practical subjects and show positive attitudes in these lessons. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well because it has a good balance between academic and practical subjects. College courses and work experience placements give pupils a feel for what they might like to do on leaving school. Pupils are well cared for and as result their personal development and well-being are good. This is supported by good relationships and pupils are confident they have someone to talk to if there is a problem. Each has a personal tutor who is the link between the pupil, school and home. Whilst behaviour was good during the inspection, incident reports show that this is not always the case and pupils are excluded for poor behaviour. These are now decreasing, mainly by fostering a more positive learning ethos.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that procedures for assessing individual needs and for tracking pupils' progress are consistent across the school.
- Give pupils regular opportunities for writing in all areas of the curriculum.

- Encourage the governors to play a more active role in checking how well the school is doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress. Achievement is satisfactory for those few pupils whose attendance is low. From low starting points on entry, most pupils in Year 11 are successful in a number of external examinations including GCSE, Entry Level GCSE, AQA Units and Edexcel DIDA. The range of external accreditation is increasing year on year and occasionally pupils take examinations in Year 10.

Pupils achieve well in practical subjects such as food technology and design and technology, mainly because the teaching is good and the activities engage pupils. Many pupils have a longstanding reluctance to write but infrequent opportunities to develop this skill means that achievement in this aspect of English is only satisfactory. The majority of pupils make good progress in their personal development and last year all pupils either followed a college course or found employment which is testimony to their improved determination and self-esteem, and to the support from school. Realistic whole-school targets, based on national test results, are set to raise achievement but assessment does not always provide a clear enough picture of pupils' individual, specific needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many activities across the curriculum promote this. Their personal development and well-being are also good. Although overall attendance is only satisfactory, this is due to a small minority of pupils. Absences are carefully and resolutely followed up. Behaviour was good during the inspection, but because of the large number of recorded incidents and exclusions, it is satisfactory overall. These incidents involve a very small minority of pupils and are decreasing. A calm and quiet atmosphere is seen as crucial to de-escalating any disruptions and staff are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and know any hint of misbehaviour or bullying will be dealt with quickly, 'You tell a teacher and it's dealt with'. Health issues and safe practices are particularly well taught across the curriculum in subjects such as science, food technology, personal, social and health education, physical education and design and technology. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through the school council and dealing with a budget gives them some insight into financial management.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Typically, secure subject knowledge, confident and enthusiastic teaching and a range of activities engage pupils' interest and they listen attentively. Teachers and teaching assistants establish a positive learning environment and pupils are well supported. The negative experiences many pupils bring with them are slowly overcome and positive relationships, together with engaging activities, help pupils regain an interest in learning. They enjoy practical lessons and work co-operatively showing good concentration. However, when pupils lose interest and become restless, it is usually because the work does not match their individual needs or the range of activities is too narrow. Assessment procedures are inconsistent across the school and targets mainly focus on what pupils will do rather than on what they need to learn. These are reviewed, but they do not provide relevant data for analysis or for any further action to be taken to improve individual achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. There is a good balance between developing academic knowledge and practical skills, which supports pupils' future options. The emphasis given to personal, social and health education and citizenship contributes positively to pupils' overall development. However, there is too little emphasis on developing writing skills. Local facilities are used for physical education activities and drumming sessions are particularly enjoyed. College courses and work placements for Key Stage 4 pupils enable them to make informed choices about what they want to do on leaving school. The extended day provision enriches what is offered during the day and pupils particularly enjoy the physical activities and cooking sessions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good quality care, guidance and support and this has a good impact on their personal development. All arrangements for safeguarding all pupils, including risk assessments, child protection and health and safety are securely in place. Careful attention is given to their medical and welfare needs via a wide and strong network of both in-school and external professionals. This is further supported by good communication with families and personal tutors. Parents are very supportive of the school and pupils' questionnaires show how happy and supported they feel. At breakfast, the youngest pupils were very keen to talk about the day ahead, 'It's good here. You get to do good things.'

The Transitional Learning Mentor is a valuable member of the school team in mentoring and following up Year 11 pupils at college, work or training and this has led very successfully to all pupils maintaining their placements. In addition, good support is

given to pupils needing help with literacy and with GCSE work. The school has a range of systems by which individual personal needs are planned for and targets set, but tracking academic progress lacks consistency. This is because there is no whole-school assessment system. Pupils can set their own targets at their progress and achievement meetings but subject targets set in annual reports are not sufficiently related to individual learning needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Now that the leadership and management of the school are settled, the focus on learning is exactly right. The headteacher provides good leadership in driving the school forward. His overriding commitment is to turn pupils' lives around and ensure they have the best possible education. This is achieved by promoting a positive learning culture with the development of the whole child at the centre of this. The leadership team and all those with a management responsibility work well together and share the vision for the future. The professional development of all staff is given a high priority and performance management is key to this. The relatively new governing body is supportive and visit on special occasions. While the chairperson is a frequent visitor, focused visits to see how well the school works on a day to day basis have yet to be established. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and because of the commitment of the headteacher and staff, the capacity to improve further is good.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	3
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	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

Elemore Hall School

Pittington

Durham

County Durham

DH6 1QD

14 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making us most welcome in your school. It was a very busy day for us but we were able to see what goes on both during the day and after school. We enjoyed being with you in lessons and having lunch with some of you. We enjoyed lunch and thought it was very tasty.

We think Elemore Hall is a good school. This is because, as some of you rightly pointed out, you are well cared for and all the staff want you to do well. It was good to see how most of you are working hard and improving your attendance so that you can learn. All of you seem to be doing well because we looked at the Learning Credit board and a lot of you have reached 'Diamond' status. Well done! We were pleased to see that you have a wider choice of examinations because you need these when you leave school and want to work. You get good support from all staff. The Transitional Learning Mentor ensures that this support is continuous. Those of you who board at school are well cared for and looked after safely.

You behaved well while we were in school but we don't think it is always like that. You can help make your school even better by trying harder to think before you do things you shouldn't and make a big effort to improve your attendance. That way you will do even better. We have asked teachers to give you more opportunities to write because we know you find that hard. We have also asked them to look more closely at the learning skills you have and see where they can be improved. Lastly, we have suggested that the governors come into school when you are around so that they can see how well you are doing.

Thank you for helping us with our work and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Noreen Buckingham Linda Buller

Lead inspector Additional Inspector