



Windlestone School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114347
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289882
Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Denebridge Row
School category	Community special		Chilton, Ferryhill
Age range of pupils	11–16		County Durham, DL17 0HP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01388 720337
Number on roll (school)	70	Fax number	01388 724904
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Cllr George Porter
		Headteacher	Mr Peter M Jonson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	5–6 October 2006	289882

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a residential school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school also offers day and extended-day provision. All students have statements of special educational need. Attainment on entry is usually low. The inspection coincided with the school's relocation from Windlestone Hall to purpose built premises on a new site two miles away. The new premises have been occupied for less than two weeks but the residence has not been completed so no students are currently boarding. The majority of students are boys. Many come from disadvantaged homes. A few students are looked after by the local authority. There are very few students from minority ethnic families. The school works with a wide variety of agencies involved in the support of children and families. The school is responsible for the management of two additional units; 'Stepping Stones' and 'SNAP' (Special Needs Alternative Provision). The students in these units are not on the roll of the school and judgements on provision and outcomes do not refer to them.

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. Good leadership, management and governance ensure that it runs smoothly. Each aspect of its work is carefully and accurately evaluated. Students are well safeguarded, achieve well and enjoy attending. Parents express huge confidence in and satisfaction with the work of the school. They feel their children are making good progress and are treated as valued partners in their children's education and development. Outstanding partnerships with other agencies contribute enormously to students' progress and well-being. The shift to new premises has been very well managed to create as little disturbance as possible. The crystal clear vision and determination of the headteacher has ensured that good standards are maintained. Students express great pride in their new school. They feel that their views and suggestions have contributed considerably to the design of the building and the grounds and a strong community spirit is clearly evident. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection and the new premises open up a number of possibilities for further improvement. The school gives good value for money.

The nature and extremity of students' difficulties makes comparison with national expectations for attainment unrealistic, but students make good progress because they are well taught. Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach. Most are particularly well skilled in managing students' behaviour. Occasionally, work is not varied enough to challenge all students equally.

Most students leave with a qualification. Last year, seven students gained five or more GCSE passes which included English, mathematics and science. This, alongside the good progress they make in improving their behaviour and attitudes, contributes significantly to improving their future prospects of economic well-being.

The school takes great care to ensure that students are well cared for. Supervision is rigorous and at all times there are good numbers of well-qualified adults to lend advice and support. Potential risk in all activities is carefully assessed and health and safety procedures rigidly adhered to. Occasionally, the behaviour of individuals poses a momentary threat to others but this is minimised by skilled management and rapid action. More often, students recognise that sensitive, listening adults are on hand to help them through moments of crisis and this helps them to keep out of trouble.

Many good initiatives raise students' awareness of how to maintain their physical and mental health. Good, healthy food is available in 'Le Café, the benefits of exercise are valued and physical activity forms a significant part of the extended day. Students are helped to understand their feelings and express their emotions so as to deepen their understanding of their difficulties and recognise the progress they are making.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching by ensuring that work is varied more carefully to meet individual students' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students achieve well. Most students arrive at the school with a lower than average level of attainment because their learning has usually been hugely disrupted by the nature of their difficulties. No group of students stands out as achieving significantly differently from any other. Great care is taken to ensure that the tiny minority of girls share equal opportunities with the boys. In recent years the value added to students learning has put the school in the top 5% of schools nationally. Care has to be taken in interpreting the school's performance data because numbers are so small.

Results of tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been improving for the last three years. It is rare for students to reach the standard expected of Year 9 students in mainstream schools. The school's challenging targets for English and mathematics were exceeded at all levels last year. Mathematics results were particularly good but science results have not improved as much as other subjects.

In Key Stage 4, continuing good progress is reflected in students' success in examinations. Results for 2006 show that students averaged just under four GCSE passes each. Grades vary from D to G in most subjects. Lower attaining students meet with good success in entry level examinations which reflect attainment at about Level 3 in English, mathematics and science.

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Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Attendance this term is over 90% and last year averaged 86%. This is much better than most schools of this type and is achieved because nearly all students enjoy school life. They appreciate the care and support they receive and the good range of activities available in and out of the classroom. The mood of the school is perfectly captured in daily School Meetings in 'The Hub,' where staff and students share their thoughts and feelings openly. These are wonderful, warming events and contribute significantly to students' good spiritual, moral and social development and they are very aware of how they can contribute to the school community. Cultural development is also good, strongly promoted through art, music and literacy but slightly less so in the development of multicultural awareness. Students try very hard to behave well. They do not always succeed but incidents are nearly always the result of personal crisis and rarely escalate. Students feel well protected in school. They know that they will never be exposed to undue risk and that any hint of bullying or intimidation is immediately challenged. In this atmosphere they thrive, learning how to live healthy lives, work and play hard and boost their chances of enjoying a successful future when they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Classroom staff have a good understanding of the difficulties students face in managing their personal lives. Good, supportive and trusting relationships are formed between students and staff and this helps students to achieve well. Teachers also have a good understanding of the subjects they teach, most subjects being taught by specialists. Many lessons are characterised by good use of computers to make learning interesting and to encourage independent learning. Dialogue between staff and students is good. It is usually encouraging and celebratory but it also leaves students in no doubt if they let their standards slip. Behaviour is very well managed by most teachers but the main difference between good and satisfactory teaching usually comes down to the effectiveness of classroom management. The most successful lessons are those that involve students doing things rather than just listening. In these circumstances students show enthusiasm and work hard. Learning would be enhanced by a greater variation of learning opportunities to ensure sure that all students are equally challenged and have equal opportunities to achieve success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements. It is well enriched, particularly so by the wide range of enjoyable, purposeful activities offered during the very popular extended day. Educational visits were limited last term as staff and students prepared for the move. The school day is well organised to reflect the needs of students. It pays good attention to matching learning opportunities with those for promoting personal development. Good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) leads to students experiencing success in all three subjects. In Key Stage 4, students have a good choice of subjects in which they can gain accreditation at a level well matched to their ability. The school farm, currently being transferred from the old hall, offers good opportunities for promoting enterprise and, from Year 9 onwards, at least two enterprise activities each year are planned for in each subject. The school has well developed plans to strengthen provision for work experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good. Physical care and support are outstanding but educational guidance and support are less well developed and this contributes to the fact that work is not always sufficiently varied to meet individual learning needs. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are exceptionally thorough and potential risk in activities is carefully assessed and minimised. Students receive good advice about future options. A well considered new initiative, implemented this year, extends care and support to students who left last year by mentoring them through their first

year in college, work or training. The school works exceptionally well with many other support agencies to ensure that students have the best possible chances in later life. The local authority has commended the excellent recording and reporting of incidents and physical interventions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. Accurate, honest self-evaluation ensures that staff and governors have a good picture of where improvements can be made and standards raised. This has resulted in good improvements since the last inspection and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher has a stunningly clear vision for the successful future of the school. It is formed through close consultation with other professionals, parents and students. The management structure of the school has been reviewed and changed to coincide with the move to new premises. The changes propose staff assuming responsibilities for whole-school issues rather than individual subjects. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these changes. The school is currently attempting to recruit a teacher to take responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment. The staff are offered good training and their performance is carefully monitored. Particularly effective monitoring of teaching has already correctly identified the key priority to better match learning activities to the needs of all learners to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to progress. The management of the two attached units 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?	1
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	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?	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	1
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	3
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	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

Windlestone School

Denebridge Row

Chilton

Ferryhill

County Durham

DL17 0HP

8 October 2006

Dear Students

It was a real pleasure to visit Windlestone last week. You do go to a good school. I didn't get to speak to all of you but thanks to those of you who spared me a bit of time and made me feel welcome. It's very clear that you're proud of your new school. I have to admit it's a bit special, even though it's not quite finished. The Forum (or Hub) and Le Café are memorable.

I was impressed by the way you've settled in so quickly and got used to new surroundings and routines. It's always nice for me to visit schools that keep getting better. Yours is one of them. Did you realise that test and exam results have been improving for the last three years at least? That's down to good teaching and your own hard work. It's a shame I couldn't see the residence in action but at least I got an insight into your extended day activities. It's very obvious that you enjoy these. You told me that you're being well looked after and I agree. I know there are odd moments when things don't go quite right for you and you get irritated but you seem to know who to go to when you need a bit of help.

One of my jobs is to give your school an idea about how it could be even better. My main suggestion is to get teachers to make sure they vary your work a bit more. No two people are alike and some of you find learning harder than others. It would be good if little changes were made so you can do your work as independently as possible.

I left on Friday with a spring in my step. Thank you Windlestone.

All the best

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector