

# Maple Ridge School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116605
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	290561
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacque Cook

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 category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	70
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Keith Norman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Debby Gooderham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001
<b>School address</b>	Maple Crescent Basingstoke RG21 5SX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01256 323639
<b>Fax number</b>	01256 841059

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Twenty-five pupils have additional autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and four pupils have severe learning difficulties (SLD). There are nearly three times as many boys as girls. The year groups are small in Reception and Years 1 and 2 but there is a steady increase in numbers as pupils join the school from mainstream education during Years 3 to 6. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are two looked-after children and 11 others receive programmed care from family links and the local respite centre. Links with social services are maintained through a home-school liaison and support service. The school operates a specialist support outreach service (STAR) to mainstream and pre-schools and since September has become one of eight special units involved in the Thomas Outreach project (TOPS) for pre-school children with communication difficulties.

The headteacher was appointed in March 2006, having been acting headteacher for a year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Maple Ridge is an effective school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their education and often make outstanding gains in their personal, social and health education (PSHE). A very strong emphasis on teaching skills such as co-operation, independence and fairness helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education and ultimately for the world of work. Excellent social development contributes to the very good progress that is made by many of the pupils with ASD. Good teaching and learning ensures that these pupils have the necessary structure so they can tackle their work successfully.

Pupils join the school with low levels of attainment but from this low base, they make good progress. However, their achievement in reading and writing is only satisfactory, although there has been some improvement this year because of action taken. Due to the close monitoring of the progress of individual pupils within classes, those that are looked after and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers and girls do as well as boys. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress because staff encourage them to work with each other and develop communication skills.

The curriculum is good and is enriched with a broad range of sporting activities and visits. A healthy lifestyle is promoted throughout and, as a result, many pupils choose healthy food and know why they should take exercise. A priority to improve the curriculum for pupils with more complex needs is developing well. While pupils' moral and spiritual development is good their cultural development is satisfactory. This is because there are not enough opportunities for them to learn about other cultures.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Procedures to help pupils with difficult behaviour are effective in assisting them to conform. The role of the home-school co-ordinator has developed well and is supporting an increasing number of families. As well as PSHE lessons, there are also social understanding and communication sessions for groups of pupils. These lessons are very successful in helping pupils to gain the knowledge necessary to keep them safe. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute to the community, which they do enthusiastically. There are good systems to record the progress made by pupils in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and they work well. In other subjects the results of assessments are not summarised to enable the next stages to be easily selected.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Over the short time in post the headteacher has made considerable changes that have improved the quality of education for the pupils. A deficit budget has been eliminated and a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system developed. The new senior management team analyses the school's performance well. Views of those involved with the school are taken into account and priorities established. As a result, the school has a good capacity to improve further. The induction of new teachers has been managed well so that pupils' progress continues to be good. Outreach services are managed well and the governance of the school is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' attainment in reading and writing.
- Improve pupils' cultural development.
- Ensure the recording of pupils' progress is effective in all subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' level of attainment is low, but they make good progress. Pupils with ASD respond extremely well to the systems that are established and used consistently. Many make exceptional progress because of the stability and routine provided. All pupils do extremely well in PSHE because it is taught throughout the curriculum as well as in specific lessons. Pupils' slow progress in reading and writing was identified by the school two years ago. Since then there has been an improvement through introducing a new reading scheme and increasing time spent on these areas. Additionally, key vocabulary is taught systematically and ICT is being used to help pupils write.

Children in the Foundation Stage improve their personal development and learn to communicate particularly well. This is because there are many opportunities for them to interact with each other and with staff.

Pupils make good progress towards meeting their targets on their individual education plans. In the small number of cases where targets are not met this is usually because they are too challenging.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal and social development is good. They have good attitudes to their work and are keen to explain what they have achieved. This is also seen in the way they relate to each other, which is very good. One pupil explained that it is important to say kind things and then added 'you get smiley faces (part of the reward system) for kindness, caring and being thoughtful to other people and we do it lots!' This positive attitude contributes to pupils' good behaviour. Their attendance is good because they really enjoy school. In one lesson, children explored the role of veterinary surgeons and then had enormous fun enthusiastically 'treating' and looking after their toy animal patients. At break and lunch times pupils want to go out into the playground either to participate energetically in the very well organised activities or to use equipment independently in the enclosed play areas.

Pupils' excellent social development leads to their increased independence and ability to co-operate successfully with others. This is particularly noticeable for many pupils with ASD. Pupils who serve on the school council take their role very seriously. They find out what is needed and help to raise funds. The wider community is also served well. Pupils raise money for charities such as guide dogs for the blind and water aid. Pupils develop a keen sense of fairness which is evident at choosing and break times. They reflect on their actions becoming more responsible for what they do. Older pupils use strategies such as 'My Plan', working with staff to develop strategies to help them manage their feelings and emotions successfully. Events such as plants growing from seed and tadpoles developing are studied by pupils who are amazed at the changes they see. Pupils' cultural awareness is developing particularly through their work in music and their celebrations of festivals.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. All staff use praise and encouragement very well so that pupils want to try hard and succeed. Effective rewards are used consistently, which builds pupils' self-esteem and confidence successfully. Very good levels of expertise in helping pupils to behave appropriately are used in all classrooms and in the playground. Pupils' attention is gained and concentration sustained through interesting, exciting and enjoyable activities. Staff also have good expertise in using strategies to support pupils with ASD. Large timers are used so pupils have warnings of changes and pupils are referred to pictorial timetables (schedules) to check what is to happen next. Clear routines are established. Signing is used effectively as a means to help children in the Foundation Stage and the younger pupils to communicate. However, it is not always used sufficiently with older pupils.

Teachers' planning is very good in ensuring that work is pitched at the right level. After an initial whole class activity, pupils are often divided into smaller groups and taught well by skilled support staff. In one lesson, for instance, more able pupils plotted tens on a very long number line while others practiced counting or matching numbers. Occasionally, however, whole class activities take too long and pupils begin to get restless. Pupils' work in lessons is assessed well against what they are expected to learn.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned so that pupils have many opportunities to use facilities in the community which contributes to the development of their social skills and future economic well-being effectively. They visit many places including shops, garden centres and a smallholding. Pupils enthused about dressing up as Victorian schoolchildren when they visited a local museum recently. Independence is increased and life skills gained through residential experiences. There are plans to merge the very good PSHE curriculum with the social understanding and communication programme, to eliminate unnecessary repetition and enable pupils to maintain high standards in their social development. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in physical activities. Regular use of the school swimming pool helps all pupils to learn to swim and yoga and massage lead pupils to appreciate a sense of calm.

Pupils with ASD are helped to gain an understanding of the world and to communicate learn through using specific programmes. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and elements of the Training and Education of Autistic and Communication Related Handicapped Children (TEACCH) make a clear contribution to these pupils' progress. Improvements have been made to the curriculum for pupils with more complex needs. Although where needed individual timetables are planned to ensure appropriate strategies are used, the school has rightly targeted this as an area for further development.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

There are high levels of supervision for the pupils to ensure they stay safe. Break and lunchtimes are divided into two, so it is also easier to involve the smaller numbers of pupils in the activities

that are organised. Child protection arrangements are rigorous. Class teachers and support staff monitor the welfare of pupils closely and particular note is taken of the more vulnerable pupils. An emotions board, for example, enables pupils to show how they are feeling so staff can help if needed. Guidance is good. Older pupils and their parents are given appropriate information and support to enable a smooth transfer to the next stage of education.

Progress is monitored well but in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT, the results are not drawn together throughout the year to enable gaps to be spotted and inform what is to be done next for individuals.

The role of the home-school co-ordinator has grown considerably and the additional staffing this year has enabled more families to be supported successfully. Part of the brief, the holiday play scheme, is very popular. There are good links with the support services.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear direction for the school. To ensure pupils continue to make good progress, priorities are carefully selected. These were readjusted suitably when the comprehensive induction and support of several new teachers rightly took precedence. Senior managers took over co-ordination roles appropriately to enable staff to settle in. Tight financial controls and changes to class structure have successfully eliminated a deficit budget.

Good monitoring systems have been established so that, throughout the year, different aspects of the work of the school are evaluated and action taken where necessary. This has led to a number of improvements including clearer and more achievable targets on individual education plans. The recent successful introduction of informal consultation weeks is in response to parental views collected as part of this process. The role of the subject co-ordinators is developing well with plans for time to be allocated for a monitoring role in the next academic year.

While the analysis of data has enabled any discrepancies in achievement to be spotted and action taken, it is not used as effectively as it could be to set targets for pupils' progress. This is because there is a reliance on the comparative data which is not available until later in the autumn term rather than using information the school already has.

The outreach services are highly regarded by the schools they serve. Regular meetings between the staff and the headteacher ensure that the growth in response to demands from schools, and subsequent enlargement of the services offered, is well organised. Governors are supportive and provide good levels of challenge to the headteacher and senior managers. They do not however, collect enough first hand information about the work of the school.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	1
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

<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.

## Annex A

**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	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**

19 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maple Ridge School, Basingstoke, RG21 5SX

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. Thank you also to the members of the school council who talked to me and told me about your school.

This is what I liked about your school:

- Maple Ridge is a good school
- you enjoy coming to school and find your lessons interesting because the teaching is good
- your social development is outstanding and you make excellent progress in personal, social and health education lessons
- your behaviour and attendance are good
- many of you with ASD are doing really well
- you have a lot of visits out of school that help you to learn
- your staff are good at looking after you
- the headteacher and senior staff run the school well.

This is what I have asked your school to do now:

- improve your reading and writing
- help you to learn more about other cultures
- make the system for recording what you have learnt in all subjects as good as it is in English, mathematics, science and ICT.

Jacque Cook Lead inspector