



Limington House School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116614
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290564
Inspection dates 26–27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Jacque Cook

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

Type of school	Special	School address	St Andrew's Road
School category	Community special		Basingstoke
Age range of pupils	2–19		RG22 6PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01256322148
Number on roll (school)	74	Fax number	0125658778
Number on roll (6th form)	18		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Nigel Wilson
		Headteacher	Ms Petra Smillie
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group 2–19	Inspection dates 26–27 September 2006	Inspection number 290564
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Limington House is a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties where there are twice as many boys as girls. Of the pupils on roll, there are 18 with profound and multiple learning difficulties and 18 with autistic spectrum disorders. Eight children in the nursery are part-time and several of these children move on to mainstream or schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils often join the school in Key Stages 2 and 3 so there are very few pupils in Key Stage 1. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There are link placements for five mainstream primary school pupils. The number of looked after children is high. This includes all those who receive respite care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of Limington House Special School is good and it provides a good standard of education for its pupils. This is because the headteacher gives a very clear direction for its work and has built a strong leadership team. Together, with the committed teachers and support staff, they have implemented significant changes since the last inspection. Good training and effective support for staff has led to pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties being taught successfully with their peers. A consistency in practice brought about by new and more rigorous monitoring procedures has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is good and staff have managed changes well. As a result, even though pupils join the school and remain with standards that are well below what would be expected for pupils of their age, from this low base they make good progress and achieve well. Teachers pitch work at suitably challenging levels and use skilled support staff effectively so, for example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with behaviour difficulties learn well. Careful analysis of data by senior staff enables any weaknesses in achievement in subjects to be spotted and steps taken to deal with them effectively. This good track record and the clear improvement plan demonstrate the good capacity the school has to improve further.

The development of a clear and common understanding by teachers of the criteria for different levels of pupils' attainment has been instrumental in enabling pupils' progress to be accurately assessed. Where progress is seen to dip, reasons are sought and these pupils are specifically monitored by members of the senior management team. This leads to pupils improving. Detailed personal targets on individual education plans are met well. However, targets for pupils' progress are not set in the subjects they study. As a result, staff have not analysed what aspects need to be a focus to improve pupils' progress further.

The good levels of care and guidance are helping pupils to become more independent. As a result, their personal development is good. They are pleased to talk about their school and say they like working and feel safe. The recent Healthy Schools Award demonstrates steps taken that have led to older pupils adopting a healthy lifestyle. There are outstanding links with support services and with parents to help them to work together to solve problems. Several parents commented how well the school helped them to cope with difficulties at home. They particularly praised the willingness of staff to discuss their concerns. Regular information sessions for parents on topics they have selected are effective. The school has identified, however, that there are a few pupils who have more time away from school than they should. Staff are endeavouring to work with the parents to deal with this.

The well-planned curriculum underpins pupils' learning about economic well-being and provides many opportunities for them to contribute to the school and the wider community. Effective strategies are used well to support learning. Children at the Foundation Stage, for example, get an outstanding start to their education that includes excellent induction procedures for those just starting school. A strong focus on language in the nursery and Class 2, where speaking and listening are a priority,

contributes to rapid improvements in children's communication skills. Courses leading to awards for older pupils are developed well and are taught to a high standard. However, key skills are not taught thoroughly enough at present.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The good effectiveness and efficiency of the further education provision flows from the vision of the leadership team to provide a clear pathway through the school. The curriculum, for example, builds on the work in Years 10 and 11. Students' independence and their economic well-being are further developed through activities such as work experience and going to college. They prepare healthy food for their peers and many have responsible 'jobs' around the school. At present, there is a lack of awards for key skills to ensure they are taught thoroughly and students gain appropriate recognition for their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' work in the key skills.
- Develop target setting in subjects.
- Work with parents to improve attendance where necessary.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils achieve well even though their attainment is well-below what would be expected for their age. An analysis of levels of achievement by the school showed that pupils were not doing as well as they should in speaking and listening. Strategies to increase communication skills have been strengthened and this is now greatly improved. A weakness in shape, space and measure in mathematics is highlighted for improvement this year. There are no measurable differences in the progress of specific groups of pupils. Much has been done to ensure pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorder make similar progress to their peers. Children at the Foundation Stage make very good progress because they are very well taught. Courses are being sought to ensure that students continue to make good progress in the key skills of communication, application of number and information and communications technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They say they think it is good fun and they like the work they do. Their behaviour is good. Due to the very good strategies staff use, many that initially

have significant difficulties improve their behaviour well. Attendance is satisfactory. It is good in the nursery and in the further education provision, but there are a very few pupils in the school who do not attend as well as they should. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Older pupils understand what they should do to safeguard themselves. Many are aware of what they need to do to stay healthy and make appropriate meal-time choices. The school prides itself in the charity and other work it does in the community. Students are very involved with recycling and fund raising. Many learn the purchasing value of money from mini-enterprise activities such as running a healthy tuck shop. They also budget for food or save for a particular treat. Their workplace skills are enhanced through work experience.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Intensive training and on-going support has been very successful in increasing staff skills in using ICT. As a result, lessons are interesting for pupils and they too increase their skills. One student independently downloaded digital photographs he had taken, arranged them, and wrote captions. All staff use signs and symbols consistently, which has contributed to the improvement in communication skills. Work is well matched to the needs of pupils and support staff are skilled in getting the best out of the pupils because they build strong relationships with them. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows leading to lapses in concentration. In one instance too long was spent on an introduction and pupils' interest waned. In another, staff did not use their time well enough to keep all the pupils in the group working.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. Two or three-yearly cycles of work ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn new things each year. Due to several pupils joining the school part way through their education, class groupings often have to be adjusted. Specific techniques and approaches are modified and used effectively. Also, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, the use of visual timetables provides a routine which helps to reduce their anxiety as they know what will happen during the day.

Courses leading to qualifications, for Years 10 and 11 and for those in the further education department are organised well to extend the pupils' learning further. These courses also help pupils to look after themselves, become good citizens and learn about the world of work. There is a lack of sufficient recognition of pupils' key skills. New courses leading to awards that will develop these areas are being explored.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and reinforced through the excellent liaison with support services and parents. Projects and initiatives are used well to enable professionals and parents to work together to solve problems successfully. Looked after children are monitored closely for their attendance and individually to check their progress to ensure they are doing as well as they should. The parents of a very small group of pupils who are absent from school too often are being worked with to get to the root of the problem, find solutions and maintain good progress. There are good arrangements to check pupils' progress against targets on individual education plans and in English, mathematics and personal and social education. However, targets are not set for what pupils are expected to achieve over a year in each subject. Suitable recording devices are being sought to support this development so that teachers know what needs to be done to move pupils on and can check if progress is fast enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and leadership team have successfully improved the provision in the school by developing a common sense of purpose amongst the staff. They also provide a good level of support for the staff. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers are comprehensive and successful. Self evaluation procedures are good involving staff and governors and taking account of the views of parents and pupils well. As a result, changes are constructive and focused on improving pupils' learning. The division into a primary and secondary department is effective giving good opportunities for department heads to ensure, for example, that pupils' learning builds each year. The governors are involved successfully with the effective monitoring programme so they too have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They provide effective support and challenge to the leadership team. Work is planned to use data more effectively to set targets and to involve middle managers in monitoring the success of their subjects in more depth.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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	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

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited recently. I very much enjoyed seeing you in lessons, looking at your work and talking with you. A big thank you to those of you who met with me and told me what makes your school good.

This is what I liked about the school.

- You make good progress, work hard and behave well.
- Teaching is good.
- Your headteacher and team run the school well and are good at making improvements so it is easier for you to learn.
- Staff take good care of you and you learn to do many things on your own.
- Children in class 1 and class 2 do very well.
- In further education the work you do in school, at college and on work experience helps you to be well-prepared for when you leave.
- Staff are good at working with your parents and other people to solve problems.

This is what I have asked the school to do now.

- Help those of you in further education to get qualifications in important skills as well as the work you are already doing.
- Set targets for you to aim for each year in your subjects.
- Improve the attendance of a few pupils who do not come to school as much as the rest of you.

With best wishes

Jacque Cook

Lead inspector