

Vale of Evesham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117058
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290702
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	136
6th form	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Duncan
Headteacher	Ann Starr
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001
School address	Four Pools Lane Evesham WR11 1BN
Telephone number	01386 443367
Fax number	01386 765787

Age group	4–19
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Inspection number	290702

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large day and residential special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The range of need and learning difficulty is broadly similar to that at the time of the last inspection, but there are significantly more students with ASD. All students have a statement of special educational need (SEN). There is boarding provision with 15 weekday boarders. Almost all pupils come from a White British background and a very small number have English as an additional language. Twelve pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school is located in close proximity to several mainstream schools. The school has secured many awards for its work, including an Active Sports Mark, Artsmark, Careers Education and Guidance Quality Mark, Healthy School Status, Eco School and Investors in People. It is currently applying for specialist school status in Cognition and Learning and is planning to open an assessment centre for nursery- aged children.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is exceptionally effective. It is extremely successful at meeting the varied and complex needs of its pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to an excellent start. From very low starting points, they make rapid progress towards their individual targets. They learn to communicate effectively using sign language and they also learn to get on well with others. Pupils from Years 1 to 11, whatever their capabilities, also make outstanding progress. Their communication, personal and social skills develop particularly well. Among students aged 16 to 19 the development of social and independent living skills is exceptional. Although standards are exceptionally low because of pupils' complex learning needs, their achievement is outstanding throughout the school because teaching is of such a high quality and the excellent curriculum is skilfully adapted to suit individual needs. Teaching is stimulating and interesting and staff have very high expectations of their pupils. The calm and enjoyable atmosphere that prevails in lessons ensures that pupils remain interested in their work, do their best and learn effectively. The very positive experiences pupils have in lessons and the excellent support they are given fills them with confidence. A very small number of teachers are less skilled than others at ensuring that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn in lessons and, in these cases, learning is less successful.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The majority of pupils are sociable and helpful and get on well with each other and with the adults who teach and support them. Relationships are excellent and many pupils are considerate of the needs of others. The elected school council acts on behalf of pupils and students to help bring about changes to outdoor activities and clubs that benefit all. Pupils learn very effectively about the importance of exercise and eating and drinking sensibly. They say they love coming to school; they trust the adults and are confident that help will always be provided when required. The care, guidance and support given to pupils is excellent. Every effort is made to ensure that communication is as effective as possible so that the needs and wishes of individuals do not go unrecognised. Procedures for safeguarding students and ensuring their health and safety are robust and reviewed regularly. Intimate care is given in a manner that preserves the dignity of those receiving it. The school keeps very detailed and comprehensive class achievement records. However, the system to help staff check and quickly analyse pupils' and students' progress is not as efficient as it might be.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is exceptionally clear about the direction the school should take and works tirelessly to bring about improvements. The school has forged excellent working relationships with other local providers and agencies which have impacted very positively on curriculum developments. Leaders, managers and staff have a wide range of experience and expertise which greatly benefits the school, partner organisations and the local authority. Issues raised by the last inspection have been effectively tackled. However, improved external speech and language support has proved difficult to secure, resulting in governors deciding that the school should finance this essential requirement themselves. Governance is very supportive and is effectively developing its role in evaluating the school's work. The leadership of the school is ambitious and highly successful, and is outstandingly well placed to bring about further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the provision made for students aged 16 to 19 is excellent. Students make outstanding progress within accredited modules of work, which are validated by external moderation. They are enthusiastic learners, particularly when involved in practical and active learning. Work is carefully planned so that they are given very good challenge in relation to their needs and prior learning. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) prepares them exceptionally well for keeping safe and healthy and enables them to have as much independence in their lives as possible. The work modules provide a very clear vocational pathway for their last few years in school. Excellent links with local colleges have been established which enhance the outstanding curriculum. The provision is very well led and managed and is highly effective in preparing students for their future lives.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The boarding provision is excellent. The outstanding links between care staff and the rest of the school ensure that pupils are well cared for at all times. The latest Commission for Social Care Inspection report was extremely favourable and confirmed that national minimum standards were met, including compliance with all requirements relating to pupils' health and safety. Action points from the report have been addressed fully. The accommodation is bright, clean and attractive. Resident pupils enjoy a wide range of interesting activities after school and value their time here. 'I love it here,' said one pupil, 'We get to do so many things, it's better than being at home'. Care staff are infinitely patient, kind and sensitive to individual need and go the extra mile to ensure all pupils experience a happy, secure, relaxed and calm environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure all staff clearly inform pupils what they are to learn in lessons.
- Devise a way to more easily see the progress pupils make throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

As a result of their significant and complex learning needs, the standards pupils' reach are exceptionally low. However, their achievement is outstanding because of the carefully adapted high quality teaching and the exceptional care and support pupils receive. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress towards their individual targets. Pupils in the rest of the school, regardless of the severity of their learning difficulties and disabilities, make outstanding progress against the targets set for them. They do exceptionally well in communication, personal skills and technology. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make excellent progress, particularly in developing essential social skills, because of the skilful teaching they receive from the talented and experienced staff. Beginning in Key Stage 4, pupils have good opportunities to develop their learning in work-related areas. In the sixth form, especially, students take advantage of work placements and college links that enhance their learning considerably. Hence the students develop mature and positive attitudes towards

moving on to other establishments. Many students achieve exceptionally well across a range of externally accredited subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They develop their social skills through the outstanding variety of social and leisure activities available to them. Pupils' attendance is good because they enjoy activities very much, and because parents are encouraged to help them attend. Pupils have keen attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. They understand very well how to be safe and how eating, drinking and exercise contribute to healthy lifestyles. They feel very happy and secure because they are comfortable in talking problems over with staff. Pupils say there is no bullying and that everyone behaves 'as well as they can'. Through many lessons, visits and visitors, pupils develop a strong awareness of other cultures and some of the wider wonders of life. Pupils happily take on many responsibilities in school, such as being dinner monitors, clearing tables and taking part in recycling projects. Some volunteer to help younger children or those who are less able. Most pupils readily join in with raising money for good causes. The school council provides a very good opportunity for pupils to present their views regarding school life. By the time they leave, many students have developed extremely good, practical, everyday skills in communicating, using computers and managing their money. They learn how to co-operate in a team, follow instructions, find their way around and turn up on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching is excellent because teachers are extremely competent at adapting activities to meet individual needs. They successfully use many alternatives to the spoken word to aid communication and are highly efficient at supplementing what they say with sign language and pictures. Lessons are frequently active and exciting, with staff joining in enthusiastically, for example, happily making paint footprints with ASD junior pupils. Frequent visits to the outdoor 'Forest School' provide endless learning opportunities. Teachers skilfully engage their pupils in a wide variety of ways, such as through song or the use of interactive technology. The talented support staff work very effectively with individuals or small groups. Pupils with the most profound learning difficulties and disabilities receive excellent teaching with very good numbers of staff to help. Hence they enjoy many activities which stimulate their senses and increase their awareness of the world around them. Staff excel at giving praise, encouraging pupils and managing behaviour. They adopt a calm but firm approach and always succeed in getting pupils to refocus on their work. In most lessons teachers ensure that students fully understand what is about to take place and what is expected of them. However, occasionally this does not happen and pupils' learning slows down because they are unclear as to what they have to do

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The outstanding curriculum meets all pupils' needs and aptitudes. There is an excellent focus on developing literacy, numeracy and personal skills. Staff constantly review and improve the curriculum, such as increasing links between subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2. Effective career guidance begins in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, students gain nationally recognised accreditation which is well matched to the more able students and those who are less able. The number of accredited courses available to pupils in the middle-ability range is being increased. The excellent personal, social and citizenship curriculum provides pupils with very good guidance and advice, including excellent support from external staff and agencies. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by breakfast, lunchtime and after-school clubs. Sport has a prominent place, with many pupils enjoying physical education lessons at the nearby high school. Almost all older students engage in a wide range of high quality work experiences and practical courses such as construction, horticulture, hair and beauty, and retail. These activities take place in school, through local employers, or with the nearby college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school succeeds in making sure that all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, feel very safe and are effectively guided and supported. Health and safety and child protection procedures are rigorous and effectively applied in supporting vulnerable pupils. A highly effective part of the pastoral care is the excellent work of the school's behaviour support team, who offer support to pupils who sometimes need a stress-free haven or somewhere to calm down. Outstanding liaison between day and residential staff ensures that pupils' successes are celebrated in both settings and that pupils' feelings and health concerns are known to all adults. Staff are extremely good at assessing how well pupils are making progress in their personal development and in their academic learning. They regularly discuss progress with pupils, and decide what needs to be done next. A great deal of valuable assessment information is gathered. However, the system for analysing the information is quite time-consuming, and it is not easy to quickly see the progress pupils make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The outstanding leadership and management are key factors in the school's continued success. The headteacher, ably supported by a strong leadership team, has played a pivotal role in maintaining and improving upon the school's performance since the last inspection. She knows the school very well and this is reflected in the school's accurate, if rather understated, self-evaluation, which takes account of the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. She has developed excellent links with local schools to promote joint activities and curriculum development. Total inclusion for all pupils lies at the heart of the school's work. Staff share the headteacher's passionate determination to provide the best possible education and start

in life for all the pupils regardless of their complex needs. Consequently, areas requiring development are swiftly identified and rapidly improved, the new school buildings being a particularly good example. Morale in the school is high and teamwork is a real strength, with all staff playing a crucial role in monitoring the school's work and performance. Governors are very supportive and are increasingly involved in evaluating the school's work. Parents are extremely happy with everything that the school provides. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote, 'The leadership of this school is first class – as is the dedication and commitment of staff at all levels.'

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
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	NA
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vale of Evesham School, Worcestershire WR11 1RD

We enjoyed our visit to your school very much. We really liked watching some of the exciting things you do and joining you for breakfast and lunch. Your parents think that you go to an excellent school and we agree with them.

- There are lots of great things about your school.
- You are very good at working hard, helping each other and listening to your teachers, and you do extremely well in your lessons.
- The staff care about you very much. They are excellent teachers and they make learning really interesting, giving you many exciting things to do.
- Your headteacher and other staff are very clever at running the school and making sure you all have a good time and do really well.
- Anybody who needs extra help is always given it and you are all very good at using sign language.
- You love learning new things and are very good at sharing, taking turns and being kind to each other.
- For all these reasons you make excellent progress.

Your headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make your school even better and we agree with them. We think that it would also be good to make sure you all know exactly what you are to learn in lessons. We also think that it would help if staff had a quicker way of finding out how much progress you make throughout the school. It was good to see that you are happy at school and doing so well. We wish you all the very best for the future. Joyce Cox and Trevor Watts (Inspection Team)