



The Collett School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117672
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290891
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Aldridge

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Lockers Park Lane
School category	Community		Hemel Hempstead
Age range of pupils	4–16		Hertfordshire HP1 1TQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01442 398988
Number on roll (school)	113	Fax number	01442 394317
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Gary Macey
		Headteacher	Ms Elaine Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters mainly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and also those with severe learning difficulties and autism. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils in the Foundation Stage. There is specialist provision for pupils with autism in the primary department only. Pupils with significant needs associated with their autism move to a different special school at the end of Year 6. All pupils have statements of their special educational need. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic circumstances and small numbers are from minority ethnic groups. There are three pupils in the care of the local authority. When pupils enter the school, which they do at different ages, their attainments are well below those expected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Collett is an effective school and this is how it sees itself. Because it is well led and managed, it provides a good standard of education. As a result, pupils' achievement is good. The rich curriculum and good care and support that pupils receive result in their good personal development. Although standards are well below national averages when pupils enter the school, and they remain so until pupils leave, this is entirely due to the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties.

Pupils in the early years class get a particularly good start, and parents are delighted with the way their children make rapid progress, particularly in acquiring independence skills. In Years 3 to 11 progress is good because pupils are taught well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and take part enthusiastically in the wide range of activities that the school provides as part of lessons, visits, lunchtime clubs and residential experiences. Those in Years 10 and 11 follow a good range of courses leading to external accreditation. There is particular enthusiasm for physical activities and pupils are taught well about personal safety. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community, and preparation for adult life is good. Almost all Year 11 pupils move on to further education.

Teaching is good, but not as consistently good in secondary classes as it is in primary groups. In the last few years there have been several changes in leadership of the secondary department, and this has resulted in a slow pace of development. A small number of parents recognise this, although parental satisfaction is high. Whilst there is much good practice, secondary teachers are not all equally skilled at teaching the least able pupils. In primary classes, pupils are constantly reminded about their personal targets and develop a good awareness of what they need to do to improve. The setting of personal targets for secondary pupils is well developed in English and personal, social and health education but is still developing in mathematics. Targets are not routinely referred to in lessons, so secondary pupils are not all clear about what these are. The school is aware of the need to develop these aspects of its practice. At present, two competent teachers provide temporary leadership in the secondary department and they have accelerated the pace of change since September.

The headteacher provides good leadership and is particularly successful in creating a caring and supportive atmosphere, providing a clear focus on teaching and learning and developing effective teamwork. Staff and governors are fully involved in the process of planning for school improvement, checking progress and evaluating the effectiveness of school practice. As a result, there is a good awareness of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in the secondary department, so that it always meets the needs of less able pupils.

- Ensure that secondary pupils know what they need to do to improve in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards are well below national averages throughout the school because pupils' have special educational needs, achievement is good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress, particularly in communication, numeracy and personal and social development. This is the result of very good teaching. In Years 3 to 11, where teaching is good, pupils make good progress. They achieve a very high proportion of the challenging targets in their individual education plans and, by Year 11, all leave with external accreditation of some kind. In the summer of 2006, almost all Year 11 pupils achieved either a GCSE or an Entry Level pass in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). There is a strong focus on pupils' achieving as well as they can, and the school sets itself challenging targets to improve achievement. These are not always reached, but when they are not, the school knows the reason. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls or pupils with different needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is very good, because there are effective systems to support those who have difficulties in maintaining good behaviour. Pupils like the staff and relationships between all members of the school community are very good, adding to the happy atmosphere and pupils feeling safe. Attendance is good.

Links with other organisations are used well to widen pupils' horizons and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise. Drama productions like 'The Wizard of Oz' are regular features of school life and they give pupils great confidence and self-esteem, especially when performed outside the school in front of the wider public. Teachers encourage pupils to empathise with those that are less fortunate when they raise funds for charities, including those of their own choice. Learning experiences give pupils a good understanding of different cultures and customs.

Secondary age pupils 'walk tall' in their blazers, an innovation suggested by the school council. Physical activities are popular and have a good effect, for example, some secondary age pupils have been inspired to pursue careers in the leisure and fitness industry, for instance. Pupils make increasingly healthy food choices, but the school recognises that there is more to be done to encourage healthy eating at lunchtime.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and consequently pupils' make good progress. Pupils feel secure and valued. As a result they are keen to do well and to ask and answer questions. Teachers question pupils well, making sure that questions are pitched at the right level, testing pupils' understanding and knowledge and ensuring that all are included. They use their accurate assessment of pupils' needs to set tasks and activities that are generally well matched to pupils' abilities. The teaching is not as consistently good in the secondary department as in the primary department. Occasionally, in secondary lessons, tasks are too difficult for less able pupils, who rely too much on adult support.

The three part lesson is well established. Most teachers share learning targets with pupils at the start and review these later, so pupils know what they have achieved and what they need to improve. The practice of involving pupils in their learning is well established in primary classes. Secondary pupils are not routinely encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. This area of the school's work is a priority in its improvement plan.

In the specialist provision for pupils with autism, teaching is good and teaching assistants contribute well to direct teaching. A good range of strategies is used effectively in primary classes to meet the needs of the pupils with significant autism.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences which are effectively brought to life and made interesting by a wealth of visits, such as to the ballet in London, and visitors such as street dancers. Links with schools, a college and the community provide further experiences, such as a gym club and vocational 'taster' courses. There is also a good range of lunchtime clubs and a programme of residential school journeys which take pupils as far afield as France.

The curriculum is relevant to pupils' needs and futures, emphasising as it does the important skills of literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education and ICT. The organisation in the primary department, with withdrawal sessions for pupils with autism, works well. Planning ensures that pupils do not miss out or repeat work unnecessarily and pupils receive the individual support and attention that they need. There is limited use of lunchtimes to promote the personal and social skills of a few secondary pupils.

For Years 10 and 11 pupils, the curriculum breadth exceeds requirements and there are eleven accredited courses. Pupils from Year 7 experience the full range of work related experiences, and a college link prepares Year 11 pupils well for the next step.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for. There are good systems to ensure their welfare and their personal care and medical needs are met well. There are very good relationships leading to happy, well supported pupils who enjoy school. Child protection procedures and current government guidelines designed to ensure pupils' safety are carefully followed. Staff know the pupils well. They track their progress carefully and intervene to support when necessary. Good links with other professionals ensure that pupils get the extra help that they need.

Guidance to help pupils improve their academic work is satisfactory. Older pupils are increasingly involved in their annual reviews and make valuable contributions to them. The practice of sharing targets with pupils, getting them to take ownership and using and referring to them in lessons is inconsistent. There is effective practice that encourages pupils' good progress. For example, younger children have their targets written using symbols and text gradually moved up the 'leaves' of a 'plant' until they reach the 'can-do flower'. These pupils know what they need to work on and are delighted with their achievements. Secondary pupils are less sure about what they need to do to improve, although there is good celebration of achievements in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, which shows in the good progress pupils make academically and personally. The headteacher provides a clear, shared vision and direction for the school. She is well supported by an assistant headteacher and departmental heads. Harmonious professional relationships and regular meetings assure good communication across the school.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors are most supportive and, as a result of self-evaluation, have recently drawn up an action plan to improve their strategic role. They have agreed a schedule of visits, and a clear focus for these.

Staff are involved most effectively in the process of school improvement. For instance, the headteacher has led the debate about what constitutes good teaching and staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Rigorous monitoring and good support, including professional development, have been instrumental in securing improvement.

Self evaluation is good and everyone is involved in the process. The school has a well constructed improvement plan that identifies the right priorities for development. Good action plans for subjects form part of the plan.

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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	2
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	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

3 November 2006

Dear Pupils

The Collett School, Lockers Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 1TQ

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking to us about school life. We came to see how well you are all getting on and whether there are any things that could be done to make your school even better.

We found that The Collett is a good school and it is a happy place where you get on well with one another. You told us that you like coming to school and there are lots of things you enjoy doing. We noticed that you get on well with your work and the oldest pupils get good examination results. Your behaviour is good and so is your attendance. We were pleased to find that most Year 11 pupils go on to college and continue their education.

You are lucky to have so many interesting and exciting experiences. There are lots of visits, visitors, clubs at school and in the community and school journeys where you stay overnight. The staff at school also take good care of you and arrange extra help from other people too. All these things help you to learn and develop as young people.

Your headteacher and staff are doing a good job. Teaching is good. One thing we have asked teachers to do is to make sure that you all know what you need to do to improve in literacy, numeracy and personal and social education. Then you will be able to make a special effort with these targets. We have also asked them to make sure that all of you have work that is not too hard or too easy but just right. That way, you will be more independent in lessons.

We wish you all the best in the future.

Mrs Sue Aldridge

(Lead inspector)