

Great Arley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119878
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291557
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Condron
Headteacher	Mr Paul McSeveny
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Holly Road Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire FY5 4HH
Telephone number	01253 821072
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

All pupils that come to this school have a statement of special educational need, reflecting the significant amount of extra help they require. Nearly half of the pupils exhibit autism spectrum disorders. A quarter of the pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, a small number have severe learning difficulties and the rest have moderate learning difficulties. The vast majority are from White British backgrounds and more than average are entitled to free school meals. A small minority of pupils are looked after by the local authority. More than three-quarters are aged 11–16 and the remainder are aged 5–11. Boys outnumber girls by two to one, which is usual for schools such as this. The school has achieved awards, such as Investors in People, Healthy Schools Award and the School Achievement Award. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals.

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. Pupils are a credit to the school and achieve well. The school is well led and managed and, as a result, there have been effective improvements since the last inspection. Subject leaders are making an increasingly strong contribution to managing new school initiatives which reinforces the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils make at least good progress in speaking, listening, reading, science, physical education, information and communication technology skills (ICT) and mathematics, in which the external accreditation provided for the older pupils is particularly challenging. They make satisfactory progress in writing, not better because they do not have enough opportunities across all subjects to practise and extend their writing skills. In addition, a few of the higher attaining older pupils are capable of studying more challenging courses and so this small group of pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress in some subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and really enjoy being at school. This is encouraged by the good range of practical activities in subjects such as design and technology, and music. Their effective adoption of healthy lifestyles helped the school to achieve Healthy School status. The school's Green Flag Eco Award reflects their understanding and concern for caring for the environment. There is a very positive ethos in the school and pupils relate very well to each other and the staff. Attendance and behaviour are good.

Teaching and learning are good. Typically, teaching is enthusiastic and work is generally carefully tailored to meet pupils' wide range of learning needs. Teaching assistants provide valuable support and yet provide the challenge to ensure the pupils become increasingly independent learners. The curriculum is good and this has been helped by the improvements made to the accommodation since the last inspection. Good links with colleges and work experience providers ensure that older pupils develop a good understanding of the workplace and the demands of further education. In addition, there are good links with mainstream schools to provide opportunities for pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their lives. Pupils are provided with very good care and staff work hard to provide a safe and supportive environment, but the school places too little emphasis on using assessment information to inform the educational guidance given to pupils. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to improve the standard of their work.

The school's own view of itself is good and generally accurate; it has a clear view of the areas it needs to improve. Governors provide effective support and challenge to senior leaders. It is good that each governor is linked to a subject leader which helps ensure they know the school well. There is clear planning for future developments, but not enough use is made of the available data to measure the impact of improvements on pupils' achievement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the range of opportunities provided for pupils to extend their writing skills.
- Ensure that the higher attaining older pupils are provided with an increased number of challenging courses.

- Ensure that assessment information is used more effectively to guide pupils' progress and to measure the impact of school improvement on pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and most make good progress despite the complexity and diversity of their learning needs. These needs mean they are unable to meet the national expectations for pupils in mainstream schools. There is no evidence to suggest that groups of pupils such as children in care, boys and girls or those eligible for free school meals make less progress than their peers in the school. The school can demonstrate that most pupils are set challenging targets and make good progress towards them. A parent commented that, 'My son enjoys his lessons and is encouraged to improve at a level that is appropriate to him.' Pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics. This is because effective tracking of pupils' progress enables teachers to make accurate, well-considered decisions about who should enter external examinations at the differing levels, including GCSE. Pupils make good progress in science and they thoroughly enjoy their practical sessions. In English, achievement in speaking, listening and reading is good but it is satisfactory in writing. Many pupils, such as members of the school council, are able to articulate their views and hold conversations confidently. There is good progress in ICT, well supported by the teaching of specific skills in the computer suite and in other subjects such as design and technology, and music. The school has achieved national recognition for the quality of their physical education. Pupils' abilities vary significantly in each year group and so the level of challenge required for the Year 11 pupils, for example, is different each year. Although the overall progress of the current Year 11 pupils is good, a minority of the higher attaining pupils are capable of attaining more GCSEs and, as a result, their progress is satisfactory rather than good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is excellent and, as a result, they work particularly well together. Pupils behave well and consequently, despite the number of pupils who have difficulties in managing their own behaviour, the use of fixed-term exclusions is rare. Pupils have a good commitment to eating and drinking healthily. They are very clear about the health value of different foods and take the management of the fruit tuck shop very seriously. Pupils also have a good understanding of the importance of taking care of themselves. For example, in an observed lesson, the older pupils discussed the need for good personal hygiene in a mature and sensible manner. They thoroughly enjoy taking part in a good range of physical activities during lessons and the lunch break. For example, an enthusiastic group of pupils and staff took a full and active part in a 'wake and shake' session at the start of the day. They respond well to the advice for safe procedures in subjects such as science and food technology. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They take a full and active part in the very positive school assemblies and are keen to gain points to help their 'house' be the best in the school. Pupils take their roles in the school council seriously and have the confidence to make constructive suggestions for improvements. They are happy that some of their ideas are acted on, yet understand that others are not. They would appreciate some more outdoor play equipment. Pupils become more independent learners as they progress through the school. Older pupils act as positive role models to the younger ones and help to look after

them. Their work and college placements are particularly successful in preparing them for life after school. However, there is more scope to extend their opportunities to develop their through enterprise-based activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good across the school. Typically, teaching is enthusiastic and characterised by good subject expertise. All staff have high expectations which challenge pupils to make good progress. Strong teamwork helps to promote very positive relationships which give pupils the confidence to ask for help when they need it. Pupils are made fully aware of the consequences of their behaviour and it is refreshing to witness their enthusiasm for gaining points for good behaviour. Pupils have an excellent approach to their learning. As a result, as they progress through the school they become independent, mature young people ready to take on the new challenges presented when they leave. At all ages, pupils respond particularly well to learning through practical experience, for example, in food technology where they thoroughly enjoyed cooking lasagne to take home. Also, the creative use of interactive whiteboards is a positive feature of most lessons and this helps to engage the pupils' interest. It is good that older pupils evaluate their own work, for example, in art and design and are keen to learn from their mistakes. Time is generally used well but occasionally activities are prolonged which limits pupils' progress to satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and pupils thoroughly enjoy their education. Good use is made of the available resources to ensure that activities match pupils' learning needs. The promotion of most aspects of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good, but there is more scope to extend the range of opportunities provided for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills in different subjects. In contrast, ICT is a strong feature of the curriculum which results in pupils making good progress. Pupils work in a stimulating and attractive environment and this helps them to take great pride in their work. Displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' achievement and help to extend their learning. There is a good range of visits, including residential trips that help to enrich pupils' learning and enhance their social skills. The curriculum is also extended by the provision of clubs during the lunch break, but after school activities are restricted due to transport arrangements. For older pupils, work experience placements, community service and college links are particularly good and pupils talk enthusiastically about their future plans based on this experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The staff team are committed to providing them with the highest levels of care. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent which means that pupils feel able to share any of their concerns to staff. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are securely in place and there is a strong focus on providing a safe and attractive learning environment. For example, lunch is a pleasant, social occasion where pupils are well-managed and enjoy each other's company. Staff also ensure that pupils have the

opportunity to enjoy their breaks without fear of harassment. The school manages the diverse and complex range of pupils' learning and personal needs well. The school has established close links with other external providers, such as Connexions, to enhance pupils' learning, set them individual academic and personal development targets and to give them advice about their futures after school. However, not enough use is made of the available data to guide pupils' as to the progress they are making towards these targets. This makes care, guidance and support good rather than outstanding as judged by the school. The majority of the parents are confident that the school keeps them well-informed whilst a minority would like to be kept better informed about any day-to-day issues in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and, as a result, the staff team is well equipped to manage the increasingly broad range of pupils' learning needs. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the opportunities provided. There is a common sense of purpose and pupils make good progress towards their challenging targets. The staff is well-managed and work well together to promote a very positive school ethos which encourages pupils to achieve well. The combined work of senior leaders, subject leaders and governors has ensured that there has been effective progress since the previous inspection. The leadership of the main subjects is good and these staff are making an increasingly constructive contribution to the school's good capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is open and honest, and provides clear priorities for improvement. However, there is insufficient use of the available assessment data to provide accurate measures of the effect of new initiatives on pupils' achievement. The school makes the most of the available resources which have improved well since the last inspection, including establishing good links in subjects such as science and mathematics to share resources and training with mainstream schools. A substantial amount of money was carried forward in the current budget, but there are plans in place to spend this on further improvements to the accommodation in the near future.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

28 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Arley School, Lancashire, FY5 4HH

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and telling me so many interesting things about your school. I have asked the headteacher to read this letter out at one of your assemblies and to express my thanks to all of you. The points look very close between the red and green houses at the moment; perhaps it will be a draw?

Great Arley School is a good school. You are a credit to the school and have excellent attitudes to your work. You also make good progress in your learning because of the good teaching. You clearly enjoy coming to school and it is good to see that the older pupils have so much patience with the younger ones. All of the staff, teaching and non-teaching, work well as a team to provide you with an interesting range of activities and help you stay healthy. I could see how much you enjoy the practical activities in subjects such as physical education, music, design and technology, and art and design. I am particularly pleased with your progress in mathematics. Also, congratulations to the older pupils as you do so well on work experience and during your time in college. The senior staff and governors run the school well and make sure that you are happy, safe and busy during your lessons and breaks. Your school council has some 'smart ideas' on how to improve the school further and I am sure that the staff will listen to their advice and include some of them in their plans for the future.

Even a good school can improve and I have three suggestions to make. I noticed that you do not have enough chances to improve your writing and I am sure that your teachers will give you more help with this in the future. Also, I have asked the staff to make sure that all the older pupils have the opportunities to attain the range and number of GCSEs they are capable of. Finally, I do not feel that you are always given enough information about how you are doing and what you need to improve in order to reach the targets you have been set in your individual learning plans. The success of these plans is based amount of progress you make in your learning. You can help by continuing to work hard.

All the very best for the future

David Smith

Lead inspector