

Portesbery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125474
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	293274
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
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 category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
6th form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elaine Wood
Headteacher	Mr Justin Price
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2001
School address	Portesbery Road Camberley GU15 3SZ
Telephone number	01276 63078
Fax number	01276 683641

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Portesbery is a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD). There are ten pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and a further number who have physical difficulties (PD). The number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased since the last inspection to 18 and there are more in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 than in other parts of the school. There are seven children in the Foundation Stage. Eight pupils are from minority ethnic groups, seven of whom are at the early stages of English language acquisition.

The school has Investors in People status and in the autumn of 2006 gained the Healthy Schools award. Recently, a service supporting extended learning at home (SELAH) was developed and a parents' group formed. The school is part of the Surrey SLD/ASD network which is a federation of eight SLD schools and a member of the Confederation in Surrey Heath with 27 other mainstream and special schools. Discussions with the Local Authority about the new school building have been ongoing since 1998.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Portesbery is a good school and parents confirm that it fulfils its mission statement of being 'a happy school where every one matters'. Work with parents is excellent both in school and through the SELAH initiative. Pupils really enjoy their education; this is largely because the overall good teaching and learning ensures that lessons are interesting and fun. Staff use praise and encouragement very effectively to improve behaviour throughout the school. As a result, behaviour is now good overall. Appropriate strategies are used well to help pupils with ASD to learn. The recent emphasis upon improving the use of the Picture Exchange and Communication System (PECS) and symbols throughout the curriculum has been very effective in developing pupils' communication skills. This is now a particular strength in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and has led to improvements in other areas of learning, particularly personal, social and health education (PSHE). The extent to which pupils' adopt a healthy lifestyle is outstanding.

Pupils join the school with very low levels of attainment but from this low base most make good progress. There is no measurable difference between the progress of groups of pupils including those with PMLD, ASD and PD. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also make similar progress to their peers.

The curriculum is good and is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors. Pupils make positive contributions to the school and the wider community through undertaking a range of activities and responsibilities. The school council is an excellent example of this. Pupils gain basic skills and develop good attitudes and safe practices that contribute to their future economic-well being effectively. Care, guidance and support are good. There are outstanding links with other agencies. An increasing number of pupils join other schools as part of their inclusion programme. However, there are major difficulties in ensuring all pupils have the same access to facilities within the school due to the inadequacies of the accommodation. There has been too little progress on this continuing issue from the last inspection. Despite the best efforts by staff, this restricts participation in some activities.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school which is shared by an enthusiastic and committed staff. The school's capacity to improve further is good. Over the last two years many changes have been successfully introduced. Teaching and learning are monitored well using a broad range of strategies. However, the assessment of pupils' attainment is not always precise enough and the analysis of this data is at the very early stages of development.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Further Education Unit (Sixth Form) is satisfactory. Although students' personal development is good and they make good gains in their personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), their progress overall is satisfactory. This is because the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. The care, guidance and support of students are good. Links with agencies and colleges are effective. Students enjoy their work experience and opportunities to work in the local community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse and use data about pupils' attainment and progress more effectively.

- Improve the Post-16 provision.
- Take steps to ensure all pupils have equal access to school's facilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Although pupils have low levels of attainment, they make good progress, particularly towards meeting their targets on individual education plans. However, students in the Further Education Unit make only satisfactory progress and at times their targets are repeated. Children at the Foundation Stage make good progress. Improvements in their personal development follow from a notable increase in their communication skills. This unlocks the door to learning for them and gives a good start to their education. Communication and PSHE continue to be strengths in Years 1 and 2. Pupils with PMLD make good progress due to the effective use of sensory teaching methods and a high regard to their special needs. Routines and structures established in classrooms contribute to the good progress made by pupils with ASD.

Due to the subject expertise of the co-ordinator, pupils make good, and at times, very good progress in two classes in science. Similar subject expertise contributes to the very good progress in communication in Class 5 which is taught by the communication and ASD specialist. The school identified that pupils were not attaining as well in information and communication technology (ICT) as they were in other subjects. This has been tackled well through the introduction of discrete ICT lessons, the appointment of an ICT technician and an enthusiastic subject co-ordinator. As a result, pupils have made good progress recently, although their achievement over time is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' and students' personal development and well being are good. They are pleased with their successes and interested in what they do. Pupils say they like school and as a result, their attendance is good. They thoroughly enjoy receiving stickers for good work and behaving well. Cooking is very popular and pupils are very aware of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Many are able to identify 'healthy food' and choose it to eat. They participate in at least two hours of physical activities a week and often join in with lunchtime sporting or leisure activities. Members of the school council take their role very seriously. The head boy and girl visit the children and pupils in the youngest classes to elicit their views prior to meetings. Other classes have their own representatives. At present, having been told how much their request for soft towels would cost, members are considering if the money would be better spent elsewhere! Pupils support the wider community well. They collect for charities such as Red Nose Day and Guide Dogs for the Blind and their recycling scheme helps to conserve resources. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good overall with a significant amount that is outstanding. However, there are occasional instances of teaching and learning in the Further Education Unit that is not so well matched to students' needs. Weaknesses that are identified through monitoring are being systematically improved. Teachers are generally skilled in matching work to the needs and ability of the pupils on a day-to-day basis. They ensure that levels of support are appropriate and pupils do well. A system using sticky notes is effective in recording exactly the gains made. All staff use praise and encouragement well which contributes to pupils' enjoyment, good behaviour and willingness to learn. Effective strategies are used to help pupils. Timers, for example, are highly successful. They indicate how much longer there is left before a change of activity. This gives pupils time to adjust so their routine is not suddenly interrupted. Aspects of the Training and Education of Autistic and Communication Related Handicapped Children (TEACCH) are used well to provide structure and security so that pupils with ASD learn effectively.

Interactive white boards are used very well by staff and pupils, however, there are instances where opportunities are missed to use ICT to support learning. Staff have improved their expertise in using communication strategies which has helped pupils considerably to make progress in other subjects. Signing is less well developed and training is scheduled shortly. Usually, lessons have a good pace, but occasionally as in a session in the Further Education Unit, activities take too long and students' interest begins to wander.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of the pupils and give them a broad range of experiences. The 'Pat Dog' is a regular visitor to the school and pupils talk animatedly about the visit of a special rock band where they had opportunities to sing and play. There are many visits to places linked with pupils' work including to an aviation museum, a sea life centre and farms as well as regular trips to the local shopping centre and garden centre. Students learn a great deal from their residential experience. Pupils can also choose to attend lunchtime clubs such as gardening. The after school clubs include swimming where parents come with their children and bring siblings to join in as a family occasion. The PSHCE programme is good and helps pupils to develop an appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Individual pupils join classes in local schools and a few transfer part time and then full time. Also, on Friday afternoons, for choice sessions, one group of pupils joins a local primary school and another, older group, joins a special school.

The curriculum for students in the Further Education Unit is based on an award bearing course and includes attendance at college and adult education classes according to the students' needs. The community is used well. However, some aspects of the students' work, such as the use of the diary format, are inappropriate as they are more suitable for a younger age group.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are robust. One parent commented 'I send my vulnerable child to school in the full knowledge that she is safe and cared for'. Links with health staff that work in the school are very effective. The Further Education Unit has a good arrangement with an organisation that leads to suitable work experience for the students. A Decisions and Choices day gives a 'taster' of courses available which helps students prepare for leaving school. This contributes well to their future economic well-being and is part of the helpful guidance they receive.

There are effective means of supporting pupils to improve their behaviour. Behaviour plans are implemented consistently and rewards are used successfully. Staff assess pupils' progress well in their lessons and most use individual education plans effectively to measure success. However, the school has rightly identified that progress over time is more difficult to monitor because data analysis is not yet good enough. Parents are very involved in their children's education. Many attended recent courses on PECS and a special weekly workshop is well established. Staff also prepare resources for parents such as stories showing photographs of the child and symbols to assist in improving behaviour. The SELAH initiative has been highly successful in extending pupils' learning into their homes and working with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher has successfully given direction to a strong staff team and through a largely accurate self evaluation process has established clear priorities. The governors, who provide a good level of challenge to the headteacher and the senior managers, are now developing their monitoring role well. Recent improvements in pupils' communication skills demonstrate the effectiveness of the high levels of training provided and the drive of the staff to raise standards. Parents are now very involved in the work of the school. Initiatives such as the siblings' day, where brothers and sisters join the school for the day, involve families well. The monitoring of the work of the school is satisfactory. There are good procedures to evaluate aspects such as teaching and learning, teachers' planning and individual education plans that have led to improvements. Particularly effective is the chart devised and used by the headteacher to track progress in the developing use of communication strategies. Subject co-ordinators have recently established their monitoring role, which is well managed and effective in improving provision in classes. However, the information about pupils' progress is not analysed sufficiently. As a first step, the reliability of the assessments of levels of attainment has been improved and one outcome has been the identification of an area of strength in the teaching of science.

The staff work very hard to ensure that pupils have an equally good quality of education. However, this is extremely difficult as the accommodation precludes non-ambulant pupils from accessing facilities used by their peers and restricts their interaction with other pupils.

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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>	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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	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	1	
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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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

3 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Portesbery School, Camberley, GU15 3SZ

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited recently. I would like to give a big thank you to the school council who told me about your school so well.

This is what I liked about your school:

- it is a good school
- most of you do well in your lessons
- you enjoy school very much
- you are outstanding at trying to do healthy things
- your communication skills have improved well
- in the early years class and class 1 improvements in communication are really good
- your school council is excellent
- the teaching is good
- your headteacher runs the school well
- staff make sure you are safe and looked after in school.

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

- look carefully at the progress you make to see if there are any parts that could be better
- do more to help the further education students to do well
- make sure all pupils can use all parts of the school.

With best wishes

Jacque Cook Lead inspector