

Holgate Meadows Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126712
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	293592
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Adrian Simm

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Allcroft
Headteacher	Ms Kathryn Stallard
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lindsay Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S5 7WE
Telephone number	0114 2456305
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2005. It is for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Presently, the school mostly comprises of pupils and staff who came from four different special schools when the local authority reorganised provision. Almost all pupils have a statement of their special educational need (SEN); those who do not are placed for assessment purposes. The school admits pupils from across the city, some of which are areas of social deprivation. Seventy-nine per cent of pupils are from White British backgrounds with the majority of others from Black Caribbean and Black African heritages. A very small number are at an early stage of learning the English language. The local authority looks after nine per cent of pupils. A small number are educated off-site, where they follow basic key-skill and vocational courses rather than the full National Curriculum.

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 which is successfully placing itself in the heart of the community. Leadership and management of the school are good. The school should be congratulated in building, in a reasonably short time, a strong community spirit. This has been no mean feat given the pupils' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their preponderance to finding new situations difficult to deal with. One pupil commented, 'I was scared when I had to start in this new, big school but I like it now.' Senior staff and governors know in which areas the school is effective and are clear about what else needs to be done. For example, the school has begun to maintain information about the academic progress and personal development made by pupils. It recognises this information is not precise enough or used fully effectively to ensure pupils develop even more.

The school is succeeding because of its effective commitment to individualised learning for the pupils. Good teaching and learning lead to the large majority of pupils achieving well and making good progress in their personal development. Given their difficulties, behaviour is good. The school records instances of poor behaviour and uses exclusions when necessary. The severity of, and the number of pupils involved in incidents are reducing at a good rate. The majority of pupils has good attendance, particularly in Key Stage 2, where many are close to 100%. However, a small number of pupils have poor attendance; some have hardly attended since the school opened. The school day is reasonably calm; pupils mostly enjoy school and get on well together and say they are improving in their understanding of what they need to do to avoid falling out with each other. When things go wrong, they apologise. The school council has been particularly effective in introducing and monitoring a no smoking policy across the site as one of many contributions towards healthier living for themselves and adults.

The school offers good care, support and guidance to pupils with growing support also, for parents and carers. In addition to teachers and teaching assistants, the effective school team comprises the inclusion team, a learning mentor and a family support team including a nurse and a social worker, part funded by a national charity group, and the local health authority. The off-site inclusion centre and an array of alternative provision help to motivate pupils who might otherwise stay at home. The partnership of support for building and maintaining pupils' individual learning packages is praiseworthy. This contributes to what is a good curriculum overall and one which is developing further. Governors keep a sharp eye on what is happening in school and ensure it offers good value for money. They have worked with the headteacher, who is leaving at the end of March 2007, to ensure effective systems are in place. The school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance of those pupils with poor attendance by working more closely with parents and carers.
- Check more closely on pupils' academic progress and their personal development and use the results from these checks, with staff and parents/carers, to ensure overall progress is as effective as it can be.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' starting points are considerably below national expectations for their ages. Their attainment has been affected detrimentally by histories of disrupted schooling including multiple exclusions. Poor attendance impacts on the achievement of a small minority. Despite this, school data shows that a good number of pupils, once settled, achieve well in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Results from national tests in 2006, point to pupils in Year 6 and Year 9 doing particularly well. A particular feature of boys' progress in Key Stage 2 are the rapid gains a majority are making in reading and writing skills at the same time as improving behaviour and near perfect attendance. Success appears to be breeding success which bodes well for the future as the pupils grow older.

The growing evidence the school has to check and track pupils' progress points to all ages of pupil with reasonable attendance progressing well overall. Whilst this data is new, and cannot yet point to trends over several years, the school has begun to track progress of pupils by ethnic background, ability and family circumstances, such as those looked after by the local authority. Progress is equally strong for the different groups. Those talented, for example, in art and physical education show signs of achieving exceptionally well. Since the school opened, only one group of Year 11 pupils has reached leaving age. They were successful in achieving GCSE grades A - G in a small range of subjects such as English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography and art. Entry level opportunities, units assessed by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and vocational accreditation, give pupils of differing abilities the opportunity to achieve well on their individual programmes.

Where improvements in pupils' standards of work coincide with improvements in their emotional, social and behaviour difficulties, careful consideration is taken, on an individual basis, about the possibility of working initially on a trial basis, in a mainstream school. For a small number of pupils of different ages, this is currently happening and is another indication of the good progress being made.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Older pupils on the school council explain clearly how, as they get older, they feel more in control of themselves and begin to realise how to avoid some of the situations that trigger their difficulties. Although school data is not completely accurate, it points to a growing number of pupils making the right choices in how to behave. There are days when pupils falter, but the severity of incidents and the numbers of pupils involved are reducing. This is reflected in lower exclusion figures and number of times pupils leave classrooms without permission. Younger school council members are clear that on occasions, they would judge an incident as one of bullying; these too are becoming fewer and staff deal with them well. Pupils are generally looking after their new school well and appreciate the broad range of specialist subject facilities now available to them. The support for improvement in healthy lifestyles is strong. The school council pays close attention to the quality of meals provided and works to improve menus. The school nurse ensures pupils' understanding of drug related, sex and relationships issues grows as pupils mature. Most older pupils have to travel to school independently because transport is not provided. Whilst, for some pupils, this impacts negatively

on their attendance, the high numbers who do attend regularly are pupils the school and parents/carers can be proud of for their keenness and diligence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Leaders have brought together a well balanced team of staff who have good subject and special educational needs expertise. They know also how pupils with histories of poor attendance and school relationships can be encouraged to maintain their learning in a way that best suits them. Generally, teaching is a good balance between pushing on with academic learning whilst fully understanding pupils' emotional, social and behaviour needs. Lessons and other learning experiences are a good balance also between class and group learning and packages designed for each individual. The systems for checking pupils' progress are beginning to provide information to teachers about what is working well in lessons and areas that could be better. Effective lessons, such as observed in Key Stage 2, have strong routines in place. Here, staff and pupils are crystal clear about what is expected during lessons both of pupils' behaviour and the targets for learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively. This approach is widespread throughout the rest of school, although occasionally, the balance between supporting pupils' personal development and challenging them academically leaves pupils short of meeting their academic targets for the lesson. The school's system for checking on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is robust and links to continuing professional development for staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities the new building offers for a very practical subject based curriculum. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils look forward to their weekly lessons in the science laboratory, which they would be unlikely to get in a mainstream school. Major initiatives are underway, for example, in supporting even better pupils' emotional needs. These are currently proving effective. Alternative options are well planned and successful for those pupils in danger of becoming disaffected with the basic school curriculum. The off-site inclusion centre, home support coordinated by the inclusion tutor and options, including college and vocational placements provided by the learning mentor, knit together well into effective personalised programmes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff care well for the pupils. They have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour, which are improving. A structured system of points given to recognise effort, hard work and sociability works well in encouraging pupils' growing skills of citizenship. Equally as successful are the staff's less formal day-to-day approaches of expecting politeness and effort as a normal routine. Staff are good role models. Records are kept carefully of all incidents worthy of recording. These are tracked but the school has yet to decide on how best to keep this information and how to use it to full effect. Staff vetting procedures meet government requirements and child protection procedures are in place. Staff, within the school's family support team, play an integral part in training staff for child protection and in supporting pupils

and families judged at risk. The support that parents, carers and pupils receive from the school's network of professionals is very good. Individual education plans and behaviour plans are effective and governors sample anonymous plans as a strand of their checking of the school's work, which is good practice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. Staff, with a vast array of roles, complement each other in supporting pupils' individual needs and learning programmes. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have brought together effectively pupils and staff from four different schools. This was no easy task given the special educational needs of the pupils. It has taken skill, effort and time to achieve. With the help of consultants who have helped point the way, the school has now got itself working effectively and is at the stage of refining what it does. The school is clear about its strengths and whilst it has worked hard to put systems into place for checking on its level of success, these are not yet fully effective. The most successful system has proved to be the school's accuracy of checking on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, both at first hand and from checking pupils' work. Improvements have stemmed effectively from this monitoring such as better ways of explaining to pupils how their work can be improved. Data about pupils' improvement in behaviour and academic progress has moved the school on, Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and both challenge and support the school to improve.

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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
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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?	1
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	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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
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 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	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

Thank you for the very positive and mature views you gave about life at Holgate Meadows. Will you please pass on my thanks to all of the pupils, including those at the off-site inclusion base, for the friendly reception I received. You spoke to me about how well the school helps you to recognise ways of improving your behaviour and thus your relationships with others. This is a tremendous step forward for you. Well done!

I agree that you have a good school. You have all, in your own way, worked together with staff to help settle everyone into the new buildings. You recognise that pupils' behaviour and relationships with each other are improving whilst at the same time, you are learning more. The courses you follow and way staff help you individually to build your learning in a way that best suits you, is a good feature. For those of you who attend regularly, this is working well but unfortunately not all of you attend as well as you should. I have asked your staff to try even harder to work with some families to try and encourage even better attendance overall.

It is clear that all staff and the governors want the best for you. To support this, I have asked the school to be a little clearer about knowing how well you are improving in your learning and personal development so that you, staff and your parents and carers recognise what else can be done to make your 'chances in life' even better. I think you may well have some ideas of your own about this.