



Ashgate Specialist Support Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 127802
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 293594
Inspection date 1 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Crossacres Road
School category	Community special		Peel Hall, Wythenshawe
Age range of pupils	3-11		Manchester M22 5DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2196642
Number on roll (school)	37	Fax number	0161 4364793
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs M Blowey
		Headteacher	Mr B Frew
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This new school makes provision for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. About 50% of the children on roll, all in the Foundation Stage class, are there to be assessed. There is a specialist class for pupils with very severe emotional and behavioural difficulties known as the POD class. The school also caters for pupils with autism, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The few refugee pupils are in the assessment class. They are older than their peers, having not been assessed in their early years of development. Further improvement, to bring the school up to its full capacity, is dependent upon new buildings. The school provides outreach support to mainstream schools which is at an early stage of development. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is above the national average but all speak English. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is significantly higher than the national average. There are a few children looked after by the local authority.

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. Opening as a new school in September 2005, the headteacher has successfully implemented a good number of strategies which have brought very considerable benefits for pupils with special educational needs. Outstanding assessment focused in the Foundation Stage class, in partnership with the clinical psychology service, has resulted in very early identification of children's needs and enabled the very best provision to be made for these very young children. Following assessment, these children including some older refugee pupils have successfully and quickly been placed in a more suitable educational setting. A small but significant number enter school emotionally damaged, with severe behaviour difficulties and with significant gaps in their education. A large number of these pupils make gains in confidence beyond expectation and go on to attain standards very close to the national average. Overall, achievement is good throughout the school. Good teaching methods are carefully matched to the different needs of the pupils and make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress. The school provides good value for money.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good and rooted in an effective curriculum. Pupils' physical fitness is developed well. There is a strong focus on developing their emotional well-being. Emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to adopt a safe lifestyle. This benefits some very vulnerable pupils and provides them with the strategies they need to look after themselves. Behaviour is good reflecting the high quality of behaviour management within the school. Attendance is unsatisfactory for those pupils with very severe emotional and behavioural difficulties because of school transport refusing to carry them on occasions. The quality of care within the school is good and greatly appreciated by parents. Links with external agencies are effective and benefit pupils, except for insufficient occupational therapy guidance on how a small number of pupils can best be positioned for learning, and on the most effective wheelchairs and standing frames for individual pupils. Speech therapists work very hard to ensure the best positioning for pupils to cope with feeding. Nursing care is outstanding.

The new leadership team, under the direction of an effective headteacher has created a successful school from scratch. Many strategies implemented have brought significant improvements for pupils with a wide range of complex special educational needs. Early and accurate identification of need enables very young children to get the best start in life. Based on what has already been achieved and the thoroughness and accuracy of planning for the next phase of development, the capacity for improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance of the very vulnerable pupils with the most challenging behaviour by ensuring they are not prevented from attending school because of transport issues.
- Ensure all pupils who require occupational therapy support receive their entitlement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children under five make very good progress. Some children achieve so well that they are quickly placed in provision more suitable to their needs in other schools. Throughout the school, the vast majority of pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties enter the school with poor personal and social skills. As they learn to share, take turns and manage their feelings, they begin to make good progress. A few of these pupils, once settled, reach standards in English, mathematics and science close to the national average. As pupils with autism begin to make independent choices and communicate their needs using pictures, they become less anxious and so begin to make good progress in all subjects. Those with the most complex needs make good, but small stepped gains in communicating their needs. In addition, they make minute, but noticeable gains in independence skills such as feeding themselves using a spoon. Minority ethnic pupils and those who are looked after achieve well. The few refugee pupils, in the assessment class, have progressed very well and more suitable provision is sought based on an excellent assessment of needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour, considering the challenging behaviour associated with pupils needs, is good. Some pupils join the school totally disaffected with education. They settle well and because of skilful methods of managing behaviour gain in self-esteem. Attendance of some pupils with very challenging behaviour is unsatisfactory because of the reluctance by the transport contractor to carry them on occasions. The majority of pupils understand the importance of eating healthy foods and taking regular exercise to keep fit. There is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils safety; this significantly benefits some of the most vulnerable pupils and helps them to cope in their community outside of school. Pupils express their views and these are taken on board seriously by staff as evidenced by their involvement in the development of the playground. However, there is not a school council to enable them to make important decisions about school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan effectively and use suitable methods to meet pupils' needs. The variety of approaches ensures that all pupils make good progress. Skilful behaviour management and a focus on building self-esteem ensure

that those with very challenging behaviour are kept on task and learn well. Good use of pictures and activities sensitively designed to promote learning enables pupils with autism to communicate their needs well and to begin to work together. Sensory experiences are used well to arouse the curiosity and elicit a response from pupils with the most complex needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to challenge pupils to achieve their targets. In the Foundation Stage, there is an emphasis on providing activities to carefully diagnose children's needs. Once diagnosed planning is refined to ensure they receive, as early as possible, activities that challenge and extend them exceptionally well in their learning. Unfortunately, in a few lessons, a dominant activity to promote learning for an individual pupil is not managed as well as it might be and distracts others in their learning. For example, a drumming activity, which successfully stimulated one individual, fascinated others but as a consequence they did not focus on their own activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is flexibly planned to meet pupils' needs. Higher attaining pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties follow programmes based on the National Curriculum and religious education. Tailored programmes promote their emotional well-being exceptionally well and contribute significantly to raising their self-esteem. A strong emphasis on personal, social and health education equips these vulnerable pupils to adopt safe practices in their communities outside of school. Throughout the rest of the school there is an emphasis on a sensory curriculum, which contributes to pupils' good achievement. Innovative programmes enable pupils with autism to manage anxiety when faced with unfamiliar situations. Feeding programmes for pupils with the most complex needs develop their social and independence skills well. Good use is made of visits to enhance the curriculum, but the range of clubs is limited. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum focuses on enabling teachers to build an accurate picture of exactly where pupils are developmentally in order to make the best educational provision for them. Throughout the school, therapy is integral to the curriculum and forms a valuable part of pupils' development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. It is greatly appreciated by parents who say, 'We have found this to be the most supportive environment that we have ever encountered for our children.' Effective links with a range of external agencies support pupils well. Support from the clinical psychology service is outstanding, but pupils do not have sufficient support for their occupational therapy needs. Pupils trust adults in school and say that they feel safe. Child protection procedures are robust. Risk assessments are thorough. Pupils' progress is successfully tracked against the targets on their individual education plans. These targets are regularly revised to raise pupil achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Governors support the headteacher's vision and commitment to providing high quality education for pupils with special educational needs. In a short space of time the headteacher and his senior team have implemented strategies that benefit pupils. The effective assessment system has identified children's needs very early and ensured that they receive the best possible provision. Skilful curriculum development and behaviour management has resulted in some very vulnerable pupils with challenging behaviour and poor self-esteem making rapid gains in confidence and achieving well. Other priorities such as providing robust and effective outreach support to help mainstream schools support and include pupils with learning difficulties are at too early a stage of development to evaluate their effectiveness. Subject leadership is good throughout the school. Systems for checking how well the school is performing are very good. Meticulous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in decisive actions to raise pupils' achievement and standards.

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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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	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	4
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	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

I greatly enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for your warm welcome. I was delighted by the enthusiasm you showed for learning on the day of my visit.

What I judge to be good about your school.

- The good progress you make in English, mathematics and science, because of the good teaching you receive.
- Your good behaviour and positive attitude to learning.
- The way in which you are encouraged to keep fit and healthy.
- The successful way in which the school identifies what is best to help you and the way it then ensures that you get such good help.
- The way in which your school is led and managed.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- To improve the attendance of those of you in the POD class and ensure that you do not have problems in being transported to school.
- To work with experts to ensure that those of you who need help with your seating have the best chairs possible so that you are very comfortable to learn.

Please continue your hard work and help your teachers make your good school an even better school.