

West Gate School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	131099
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	293704
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Arnalena Bee

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	126
6th form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynton Yates
Headteacher	Ann Standley
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 1998
School address	Glenfield Road Leicester LE3 6DN
Telephone number	0116 2856181
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Age group	5-19
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to Ofsted notification

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

West Gate was established as a new school in August 2006. It caters for pupils aged between 5 and 19 who have moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties and disabilities. There is specialist provision for primary-aged pupils with severe autism. Two special schools were amalgamated. Both housed pupils with very different types of complex needs. During the last three years the headteacher has managed both schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small minority from minority ethnic groups. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school has Specialist Special School status in cognition and learning for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

West Gate is a satisfactory school with some good features. The amalgamation has presented a huge challenge that the headteacher and her senior staff have tackled enthusiastically and managed well. Throughout it, they have rightly recognised the importance of meeting pupils' personal needs. Personal development and well-being are good. The large majority of parents are pleased with how everyone works together, particularly in enabling their children to develop confidence and the enjoyment of school. Relationships between the pupils and the many adults who help them are very good. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They thoroughly enjoy their time in school. The pupils' complex learning difficulties and disabilities mean that standards are very low compared to other pupils their age. In relation to their low starting points, however, pupils' ideas of the need to live healthy lifestyles are good. Many pupils' have limited speech and language, but use words like 'muscles' and 'strong' when describing why they need to eat healthy foods. Pupils know that exercise is important and say they especially enjoy their physical education lessons. Pupils' contribution to the community and wider world is satisfactory. They are aware of collecting money for charity, which the school supports. One parent wrote: 'I cannot fault the staff. They are warm and caring and I know, without a doubt, that my son loves coming to school and is well cared for and safe whilst he is in their care.' Parents are right: care, guidance and support are good. The personal care that pupils receive is of high quality and is enhanced by strong links with support agencies. Academic guidance and support, though satisfactory, has some areas for improvement. Lots of information is collected on individual pupils but this is not always used effectively to set targets for them. This means that teaching is not always closely enough focused on individual needs. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there is some variation between classes. In the classes where teaching is good, pupils are achieving well. During their first year together in this new school, the leaders and managers have got off to a good start developing their new roles, in particular, focusing on improving the curriculum to suit the needs of all pupils. The headteacher and her deputy have started to monitor the teaching and have correctly identified areas for development, but monitoring is not consistently effective. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governors, with a good understanding of the difficulties involved in the amalgamation of two schools, have been both helpful and appropriately challenging during the process. Achievement is satisfactory, supported by the satisfactory curriculum. It is enhanced by the good personal, social and health (PSHE) programme, which promotes pupils' personal development well. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 covers the areas pupils need to study, but as yet, lacks courses that lead to opportunities for pupils to show their achievement when they leave.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The provision for the post-16 students, many of whom have severe and profound difficulties, is a strength of the school. Achievement is good as they study their 'Learning for Life' units. Great care is taken to record their work using photographic evidence and to develop sensitive worksheets that the students can relate to. As a result, the students are really proud of what they have achieved. The special care and support that these students receive mirror that in the rest of the school and are of a high quality. Students are soundly prepared for life outside school by the time they leave. Leadership and management of this area of the school's work are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching where it is weaker so that pupils achieve consistently well, and monitor teaching more effectively.
- Ensure pupils in Key Stage 4 leave school with qualifications that demonstrate their best achievement, by improving the curriculum at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the way that information relating to pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is shared with staff so that it is used more effectively to develop targets for individuals. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is satisfactory. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is dependent on the quality of teaching they receive. In the classes where teaching is consistently good, achievement is better, for example in the post-16 classes. The achievement of the primary-aged pupils, who are part of the specialist provision for severe autism, also varies according to the quality of teaching of the class they are in. Standards are very low because of the pupils' specific and complex learning difficulties and disabilities; nevertheless, progress is satisfactory. The Specialist Special School status has required the school to set rigorous targets to improve older pupils' achievement further. Pupils are on track to reach these targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good and contributes well to them developing confidence and self-esteem as they get older. Most teachers and teaching assistants promote personal skills consistently throughout the day and this contributes significantly to the good progress pupils make. Pupils get on well with each other and the more confident pupils welcome visitors who come into school and are keen to initiate conversation. Visitors greatly reinforce and bring learning to life for these pupils who have such complex needs. For example, when talking about the need to keep safe, pupils remembered the fireman who came to talk them about fire safety. Taking into account their complex learning difficulties, these pupils show a good awareness of the need to keep safe. For example, they speak in a limited but confident way about road safety. Attendance is satisfactory but many pupils have complex medical difficulties that at times interfere with their attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, there is some good teaching and learning in many parts of the school, for example, for post-16 pupils. When learning is good, the teachers make sure that all pupils are fully involved. Basic academic and social skills are taught effectively. For example, pupils in Key Stage 3 were seen happily writing their name as they signed in. Later they were encouraged to make choices as they looked at pictures to decide what they wanted to eat at lunchtime. In all lessons, relationships are generally very good and the teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. All adults have high expectations with regard to behaviour and this results in pupils behaving well in lessons. Lessons are usually well resourced to make learning interesting. In lessons where learning is less effective, teachers' questioning does not involve all pupils. Occasionally, pupils with physical difficulties are given too little attention and are not fully involved in all activities. Some social skills, such as highlighting the need to listen when others speak, are not effectively promoted by the adults who are in charge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Subject and team leaders have begun to develop their new roles well. They have focused enthusiastically on the development of policies and schemes of work in all subject areas to include the wide range of pupils' complex learning difficulties and disabilities. They acknowledge that there is still a way to go. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is good and promotes all pupils' personal and social development well. Developments in the Key Stage 4 curriculum now ensure that these pupils receive the curriculum they are entitled to. Despite this, although identified by the school as an area for development, few courses lead to accreditation in basic skills or allow recognition of small steps of achievement within a national framework. The curriculum for all pupils is focused appropriately on the skills they will need in their future lives. It is enriched well through well-planned visits to places of interest. Good facilities in the school such as the sensory rooms and the swimming pool enhance the curriculum further for all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

All pupils are well cared for and looked after during their time in school. The school works well with external agents, such as the speech and language specialists who support pupils with autism in the specialist provision classes and a number of pupils in the rest of the school. There are good procedures for safeguarding pupils. Pupils say they feel safe and know that there is always an adult nearby if they have a worry. Pupils are supported well in their personal development. Achievement in basic literacy and numeracy skills is tracked systematically but not all teachers use this information as effectively as they might, for example, to set individual

targets. All pupils have individual education plans, which are reviewed regularly. The quality of the targets in these plans has been monitored and the school acknowledges that not all pupils have targets that are both realistic and achievable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has led her team through the amalgamation with determination and sensitivity. Her leadership and management are good. It has been hard work, but the very clear management structure that she has developed through her knowledge of both schools is guiding everyone very well. Talking to senior staff, team leaders, subject co-ordinators, teachers and support staff, there is a wonderful feel of a common purpose that is focused on the pupils' needs and interests. The capacity to improve is satisfactory. In the short time the school has been opened, sound systems have been introduced and good practice, from both schools, has been identified and built on. A lot of the development work, such as the improvements in the curriculum and the definition of the roles of the team leaders and subject leaders, has been well thought through, but has not yet had time to have a full impact on progress. The quality of teaching has been checked and areas for improvements have been identified but, as yet, monitoring is not rigorous enough to bring about rapid improvement. The governors both challenge and support the school well. They have a good idea of where the school is at present and are dedicated and committed to working towards the best for everyone.

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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?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
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?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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	3	
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

12 June 2007

Dear Pupils

West Gate Special School, Leicester, LE3 6DN

You may remember that we came to visit your school a few weeks ago. Thank you for making us so welcome. We think you all work hard in your lessons and behave well. The school is satisfactory.

- I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.
- You are well looked after by your teachers and the many other adults who help you at school. The people who look after you at home agree.
- You make satisfactory progress, but when you are taught well you make good progress.
- The oldest pupils in the school achieve well because they are always taught well.
- You have a good idea of the need to eat healthily and the need to take exercise regularly.
- You are learning a lot about the need to keep yourselves safe.
- The headteacher leads the school well and the governors are good at helping her.
- To make the school even better, we have asked your teachers to:
 - make sure teaching is good in all lessons
 - introduce more courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to show what they can do
 - make sure that all staff use the information that shows how well you are doing when they are setting targets for you.

We know that you all try to do your best every day. Keep smiling and having fun as you learn.

Yours sincerely Nina Bee Lead Inspector