



# Maplefields School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 131186  
**Local Authority** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 293718  
**Inspection date** 8 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steven Parker

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	School Place
<b>School category</b>	Community		Corby
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-11		NN18 0QP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 409040
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	28	<b>Fax number</b>	01536 409041
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Ken Gosland
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynda Morgan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Maplefields provides for primary aged pupils with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority come from north Northamptonshire, but a few travel long distances from Leicester and Rutland. Many of the pupils have additional specific learning and communication difficulties. The majority come from White British, socially deprived backgrounds, in which many have experienced abuse and trauma, which seriously inhibits their healthy emotional development. Many are known to social services and two are in their care. There is only one girl in the school. There are currently no pupils in the Foundation Stage. The school is currently undergoing the first stage of a proposed change in character, to become an all age school. So far, this has involved establishing a Year 7 group, who would previously have attended a local secondary special school, which is due for closure.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Maplefields is an outstanding school that often transforms the life chances of many young people through its excellent care, guidance and support. The onsite work of a therapist and a counsellor weaves naturally in with that of highly committed classroom staff to help children regain, or even establish for the first time, a sense of worth and self-esteem. As one boy observed, 'They've really helped me to get back on track.' A crucial part of this work is nurturing and sustaining family and carer partnerships to ensure that pupils experience consistency in their lives. Pupils are underperforming when they enter the school, often because they have had previous fractured and negative experiences in mainstream schooling. Although standards remain below average levels, pupils make exceptional progress across all areas of learning and achieve very well. Teachers and their able assistants work in very effective partnership to individualise pupils' work and support for learning. Staff have well developed knowledge of the needs of their pupils and use this information successfully to inform their planning, although new teachers do not yet share a common understanding of the standards of pupils' work. The headteacher, her deputy and key members of the governing body have worked tirelessly together since the inception of the school. This has resulted in the development of its strong, positive ethos and culture, an excellent, highly relevant curriculum, an exemplary and clearly successful approach to managing pupils' extremely challenging behaviour and robust and consistent structures and routines. It is this latter strength that has enabled the school to cope seamlessly with a significant turnover of staff in the recent past, as the result of promotions and retirement. Half the teaching staff joined at the start of the current term, and, with rigorous induction support, they have been able to provide continuity of consistently good teaching across the school. Effective arrangements have also been made, to ensure that highly effective leadership and management are sustained during a potentially difficult transition to the new management structure required for the proposed expanded school. So far, the school is coping very well with the prospect of change, but there is some valid concern about the tight timescale and a lack of clarity concerning staffing issues and resource implications. The school is highly regarded in the wider educational community because of its much appreciated training and outreach support for schools and individual pupils, a number of whom attend Maplefields part time, as well as for its provision of practice placements for social work students from the local university. Leaders and governors have a very clear and realistic picture of the school's strengths and have a strong commitment to continuous development and improvement of its provision. They were, however, overly cautious in evaluating the quality of some aspects of the school's work and unnecessarily modest about its overall effectiveness.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that leaders regularly monitor teachers' assessment of pupils' attainments to ensure consistency in their judgements.
- As a matter of urgency, clarify the timetable, staffing implications and resource provision for the proposed expanded school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards in the school are below average, but pupils achieve very well because they make excellent progress in their learning, especially when considering their often very unsettled prior educational experiences. They settle quickly at Maplefields, because they are provided with a very clear framework of acceptability, immediate and effective praise and reinforcement of appropriate behaviours, and highly effective pastoral support. Pupils have most difficulty with reading and communication and teachers place a particularly strong focus on helping them successfully to develop these skills. The school's extremely high quality use and application of information and communication technology (ICT) also makes a very important contribution to pupils' learning. As a result of this wide-ranging support, pupils make impressive gains in their social skills and this, in turn, gives them the confidence to work hard and use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills very well across all other subjects. The school sets ambitious, but realistic targets for pupils. They rise to this challenge and rarely disappoint. Comprehensive data confirms that girls and boys, pupils with additional needs and those in the care of the local authority all achieve equally well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are very clear in saying that they feel safe and secure and enjoy coming to school, because of the excitingly wide range of activities on offer, and all the good friends that they have there. This results in much improved attendance, so that, overall, it is good for this type of school. They appreciate the help they are given to learn how to control their own behaviour, which is exemplary when considering the difficulties they have to cope with. They become confident learners who can converse successfully with staff and visitors, despite the fact that many have communication difficulties. Their relationships with staff and each other are mutually respectful, and they are justifiably proud of their school and work. The school encourages them to think of the needs of others, which often manifests itself in active engagement with charitable fund raising activities, and it is impressive when they ignore any out of control behaviour in their peers. They are protective of the school environment, the quality of which they clearly appreciate. They make a very positive contribution to the life of the school. For example, representatives serve responsibly on the school council and negotiate very sensible changes to the way the school works, and a number have received peer mentor training to support their very effective work as 'buddies' to other pupils. These approaches to encouraging independence, when combined with a strong focus on developing basic skills, make a significant contribution to pupils' future economic well-being. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need for healthy eating and participate enthusiastically in the many physical and sporting activities available to them. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good because of the impact of an outstandingly well planned curriculum and high quality enrichment activities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall, with evidence of excellent practice from long-serving individuals, who provide good role models for new staff to emulate. However, teachers do not yet have a common understanding of what standards of attainment to expect of pupils and how to achieve consistent judgements, using assessment materials. Exceptionally strong teamwork between teachers, their talented teaching assistants, the therapist and the counsellor make an important contribution to the settled atmosphere in classes and around the school. Many of the staff are 'home grown' through the school's sensitive identification of individual strengths, and encouragement and support of further study. Well chosen, carefully planned materials that are relevant to pupils' individual needs, together with excellent use of computers and interactive whiteboards, bring subjects alive and engage pupils' interest. This helps them to learn very successfully.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. It is highly relevant and responsive to individual needs, including those of identified gifted and talented pupils, and rightly prioritises the development of basic skills as a foundation for successful learning. It does, though, have an imaginative structure that ensures pupils experience a broad diet of the full range of National Curriculum subjects, which feeds pupils' curiosity and extends their interest and capabilities. Considerable enrichment activities in performing and expressive arts, outdoor activities and sport make full use of the wider community and give pupils many opportunities to work alongside their mainstream peers. The curriculum has a strong emphasis on personal and social development, health education and awareness of personal responsibility. Individual education and behaviour plans are used well to personalise learning so the school has a very clear picture of each pupils' experiences on a day-to-day basis.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school provides exemplary support for pupils' care and welfare and highly focused guidance to encourage their academic progress. The whole staff team place the individual child at the centre of their efforts, dealing with each pupil empathetically but unsentimentally, to encourage their confidence and independence. Pupils' safety and welfare are assured through highly structured procedures, and extremely effective arrangements are in place to work successfully with a wide range of agencies to ensure pupils' good attendance, overall development and pastoral care. These vulnerable children and their families, who are often having to cope with very challenging personal

circumstances, benefit from excellent intervention and nurturing support. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of this aspect of the school's work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are exceptional. The headteacher has provided vision and outstanding leadership throughout the school's history, offering highly focused support and encouragement to her whole staff team and pursuing innovation and continuous improvement as a matter of course. Her equally able deputy has enabled a highly successful, collaborative partnership with other managers, some of whom are new to the school, to ensure that the school is well placed to meet the challenges of its current changing circumstances. A sensitive and thoughtful approach to recruitment, induction, training and development of individuals' potential has resulted in the creation of a staff group that can sustain high standards of practice across the school. Governors are highly supportive and make sure that they are extremely knowledgeable about and fully understand what the school does, in order that they can provide appropriately strong strategic advice and challenge. They have managed this consistently, in spite of ongoing difficulties in recruiting and sustaining a full membership. The work of the bursar has been an important contributory factor in the school's effectiveness and efficiency. There are comprehensive systems in place to gather information about all aspects of the school's work and this evidence is used very well to inform a continuing programme of well focused school improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

- As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well it helps you to learn and how well you are getting on. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for talking to me so confidently. It was very helpful to hear about what the school does for you and how much you appreciate the support you get from all the staff. Special thanks must go to the members of the school council, who spoke for all of you in telling me how good they thought your school is. I too thought that your school was exceptional and there were many things that I liked.
- You are helped very well to cope with the difficulties you have had in other schools and at home, so that you make excellent progress in your learning.
- Your school is a very happy place which helps you to feel better about yourself and much more able to control your behaviour, which I thought was outstanding.
- You really enjoy going to school, which means that your attendance is very good.
- All the staff make a great team who arrange all sorts of interesting things for you to do, so that you are interested and helped to do your best.
- The school helps your families to help you, and your mums, dads and carers really appreciate this.
- The headteacher and everyone else who works in the school, including the governors, do their very best to make sure your time in school is the best you can have.
- Your school knows what it is good at and what it needs to do to be even better. I have asked the school to
- Make sure that all teachers agree about what good work is.
- Work with others who can help them to make sure that the planned changes to your school happen quickly and successfully. I would also like to ask you to help by continuing to act sensibly and responsibly during this period of change.