

Thomas Bewick School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131988
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	293911
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	68
6th form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gustav Macleod
Headteacher	Mrs Audrey Lindley
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Hillhead Parkway Chapel House Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE5 1DS
Telephone number	0191 2675435
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Bewick is a day and residential special school for pupils with autism and pervasive development disorder, located on two sites a few miles apart. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is based within the residential unit. The main school is due to be moved in 2008 to a new building that is located on the same site as two mainstream schools. Currently there are 68 pupils on roll, including eight girls. Six boys are resident for part of the week and other pupils access evening activities alongside the resident pupils. A small number of pupils are in public care, whilst eight pupils have support from respite services. Ten pupils have English as an additional language. All pupils in the main school have a statement of special educational needs for autism, whilst the children in the Foundation Stage are being assessed. The school is affiliated to the Specialist Schools Trust and has ActiveMark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thomas Bewick School provides a good education. It is well led and managed and, as a result, has made good progress since the last inspection. Staff and pupils are excited about their new school. They have contributed to the design of the new build, which will be ready for them to move into next year.

Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Pupils make good progress towards targets that take into account their autism, whilst also giving challenge. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of their learning. Pupils in Key Stages 1 to 4 make good progress in their basic skills of writing, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT), whilst in reading their progress is satisfactory. Occasionally, teachers' planning is not sufficiently focussed on the specific learning needs of each pupil. When this occurs, pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. The staff works well as a team and usually have high expectations. This helps to promote a positive work ethic amongst pupils and the confidence to learn from their mistakes. Outstanding teaching in art inspires pupils to make excellent progress in this subject. Pupils achieve well in an extensive range of sporting activities. The provision for students in Post-16 is good and they achieve well in a range of accredited courses that make a positive contribution to their economic well-being.

There is a good curriculum with outstanding provision for the Creative Arts. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, which together with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have positive attitudes, enjoy attending school and are proud of their work. Positive relationships promote good behaviour and assist the positive management of any inappropriate behaviour.

Care, guidance and support are good and this helps to encourage pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. The school works well with other professionals and parents to promote pupils' well-being. A high priority is placed on developing the communication skills that provide pupils with access to their learning and boosts their social skills.

The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation shows that senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and provide a good capacity to improve. The staff works well as a team and has a shared ambition for the future of the school. Senior leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but there is too little involvement of subject coordinators in this process. There are good links with other schools to provide opportunities for pupils to spend time with their mainstream peers.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provision is good. Effective leadership and management provide students with a good curriculum that is matched to their individual learning needs. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, students achieve well.

The staff team know the students well and this ensures that they provide a good balance of support and challenge in an exciting range of activities. There is a good range of accreditation available to the students and staff are always looking to develop courses in response to the students' changing needs. The good focus on the students' basic skills is put to effective use

in their very successful enterprise activities. Students form strong friendships and many of them work well in pairs and teams. This was evident during the inspection as they prepared to take part in a coastal walk as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Students have access to excellent opportunities to participate in creative activities, which involve them very positively in the local community. Displays of their work are exhibited locally and this helps to boost the students' self-esteem. They also enjoy their involvement in a wide range of sporting activities in the local area. The annual residential camp is a highlight of the year and provides an opportunity to extend the students' good personal development. Some students access part-time courses at a local college and are involved in successful work placements in the community. The students become more confident but there are too few opportunities for them to travel independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the school is able to measure the impact of the time spent in residence on pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Extend the involvement of subject coordinators in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that all lesson planning is focussed on meeting the specific learning needs of each pupil.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

There is good achievement by boys and girls in their time in school. It is not appropriate to compare with national standards because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress towards targets that are carefully tailored to meet their very individual and specific learning needs. Systems are in place that identify when adequate rather good achievement takes place and, in response, a good range of strategies are introduced to boost pupils' performance. Teaching and the curriculum in the Foundation Stage meet the children's needs well and, as a result, they make good progress. Pupils across the school, including those with English as an additional language, respond well to the effective approaches used to develop their communication skills. Consequently, pupils make good progress overall in literacy; although, in reading it is adequate rather than good. They make good progress in speaking and listening and the higher attaining pupils extend the quality and quantity of their writing. In mathematics, pupils achieve well because of the practical activities provided for them. The effective use of interactive whiteboards promotes pupils' good progress in the use of ICT. Pupils are very proud of their excellent work in art. The attractive and stimulating displays around the school reflect their work that is based on a good range of cultures. Pupils make good progress in an extensive range of physical activities, including rebound therapy, judo and football.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy their time in school and despite their autism many pupils develop positive relationships with others. As a result, attendance is good, which contributes to the pupils' good behaviour. Some pupils display

challenging behaviour but respond well to the school's behaviour management strategies. Pupils become increasingly aware of how to keep safe and stay healthy. They enjoy physical activity and participate keenly, for example, in swimming, horse riding and cycling. Healthy eating is encouraged and a well planned menu is presented at lunch times. Although the nature of autism can be an obstacle to good eating habits, the majority of pupils enjoy their school meals. During inspection, it was Healthy Living Week. A group of pupils reacted positively to a workshop where they learnt how to make a healthy snack. There is a good take up of opportunities to develop personal success; for example, pupils' participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Given the good attitudes and behaviour in the school, pupils are well prepared for their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Typically teaching is enthusiastic, brisk and purposeful. No time is wasted and activities are split into small sections to maintain pupils' interest. The effective use of assessment ensures that pupils' work is carefully matched to their needs. Teachers and special needs assistants work well together and they fully understand pupils' learning needs. Most staff use tried and tested strategies that help pupils with autism to make good progress. Expectations are high and the staff communicate with pupils effectively to ensure they are aware of what is expected. There is a good blend of structured and exciting activities to extend pupils' learning and social skills. The displays in the classroom enhance pupils' learning and celebrate their achievement. Relationships are strong and this gives pupils the confidence to learn from their mistakes. Specialist art teaching is inspirational and, as a result, pupils' make outstanding progress in their work. Occasionally, adequate planning has too little focus on pupils' specific learning needs and this leads to satisfactory rather than good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It is carefully tailored to meet the pupils' varying learning needs. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage provides rich and stimulating opportunities for them to engage positively in a widening range of experiences. Elsewhere in the school, pupils have a varied and enriched curriculum. Local facilities are used; for example, to extend the opportunities for pupils to be involved in practical science. There is a good focus on the teaching of basic skills across all subjects. For example, the drive to develop pupils' communication and interaction skills is particularly successful. An extensive range of educational visits and visitors successfully boosts pupils' enjoyment and learning. The creative arts curriculum is outstanding and is a major boost to pupils' confidence and their contribution to the community. The school has gained the Active Mark, which reflects its good provision for sporting activities. The provision of enterprise activities is successful in school and also in the wider community. For example, at the time of the inspection the school hall contained many high quality displays focussing on fair trade around the world. Opportunities for pupils to learn and play alongside their mainstream peers are good, an improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in a good range of out of school activities alongside the pupils in residence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents are quite right in their view that this is a good school, which cares for all within it. One parent typified the views of the large majority when she said, 'My child is making significant progress. I'm proud of my son's achievements and grateful that he has had the opportunity to go to a school with such dedicated staff.'

The staff team are committed to high quality care, which contributes to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their good achievement. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and regularly reviewed and within this environment pupils feel safe and supported. Close liaison with parents and good quality support agencies, for example, occupational therapists, contribute significantly to pupils' medical and welfare needs. An effective team of speech and language therapists work closely with staff to review pupils' individual progress and set new and challenging targets. The use of a scheme with pictorial prompts is very effective in giving pupils a communication tool to help them gain independence and interact effectively with adults and peers at school and at home. A positive working relationship between the school and the Connexions Service enhances pupils' personal guidance.

Academic guidance is good and the special needs assistants have a beneficial impact on pupils' progress. However, there are limitations in the marking of the work of the higher attaining pupils and as a result, they are not fully aware of how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has the determination and enthusiasm to drive the school forward. She is well supported by a team of senior leaders who make a valuable contribution to the school's good capacity to improve by striving for excellence. A rigorous self-review process leads to an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff training is effective; for example, by boosting the expertise of the special needs assistants. The governing body have a wealth of expertise, know the school well and provide good support and guidance to help move the school forward. The new strategic school improvement plan has a manageable number of priorities that are central to school improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders is good. However, there are limitations in the involvement of subject coordinators; for example, in ensuring that lesson planning and marking are of a more consistent quality across the school. The unsuitability of the current accommodation is being remedied by an exciting new build that is based on a co-located site. This is an inclusive school that works well with other schools and agencies to extend pupils' opportunities. It provides good value for money.

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

22 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Bewick School, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE5 1DS

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. You made Mr Willday and I feel very welcome. We were very impressed with the attractive displays around the school and, in particular, your excellent art work. Particular thanks go to the pupils on the school council who gave up some of their lunch break to talk with Mr Willday.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Your headteacher, with good support from the governors and staff, ensures that you receive a good education.
- You thoroughly enjoy your time at the school and make good progress in your work.
- You have positive attitudes, behave well and your attendance is good.
- Staff make sure your work is interesting and is neither too easy nor too hard.
- The staff encourages you to be healthy and stay safe.
- You take part in a wide range of interesting activities including, for example, sporting and enterprise ventures.

Even though we thought your school was good it could still be improved.

We think that the following things would help to do this.

- Teachers should make sure they plan carefully for all of your lessons.
- The staff should ensure that they are aware of the progress you make as a result of spending time in the residential unit.
- Teachers leading on subjects should spend time in other classes.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

Lead inspector