Welcombe Hills School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number	132202
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	293981
Inspection date	12 October 2006
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special	**School address**	Blue Cap Road
School category	Community special		Stratford-upon-Avon
Age range of pupils	2–19		CV37 6TQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	**Telephone number**	01789 266845
Number on roll (school)	158	**Fax number**	01789 204 121
Number on roll (6th form)	15		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	**Chair**	Lucy Strauss (Acting)
		Headteacher	Joyce Clark
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
2–19	12 October 2006	293981

Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties provides specialist provision for the region of south Warwickshire including Stratford upon Avon. It is relatively new and opened in September 2000 as an amalgamation of two schools. Since that time the accommodation has been refurbished and the building considerably extended. The admission number remains at 100, but there are 158 pupils at school, 102 boys and 56 girls. All have statements of special educational need. Only a few are from ethnic minorities. Increasingly, pupils are being admitted with additional and complex needs, such as those to do with autism.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Welcombe Hills School is a good school where pupils' achievement is good. Since the last inspection outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher have ensured continuing improvement, despite the difficulties caused by a lengthy and disruptive building programme.

All pupils, including those with additional and complex needs, develop their personal and social skills including their behaviour outstandingly well and prosper because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. The very well planned programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils become as independent as possible and prepares them well for participation in their annual residential visits, the next stage of their education or life after school. In this they are helped by the very effective support of specialist visitors from many agencies and services. Pupils like and trust the staff. They say they are 'fab' and that they always help them when they are troubled. They enjoy school because they feel safe and happy and they attend regularly.

Standards are significantly below average because of pupils' learning difficulties. However, they make good progress in their learning as they move through the school because they work hard and respond well to the good quality of teaching. All pupils make equivalently good progress because, most of the time, lessons are planned well to meet their different learning needs, even when these are wide ranging. A small minority of lessons are not planned well enough because they are taught by teachers without specialist knowledge who have not gained sufficient help and advice from subject leaders. The good curriculum appropriately focuses on developing pupils' communication skills and promoting independence. It meets all national requirements and is substantially enriched by a very wide range of lunchtime clubs, summer schools and an extensive programme of residential visits. Year 11 pupils routinely show the full extent of their learning over their time at school by gaining good success on a wide range of nationally accredited awards. Children at the Foundation Stage are prepared well for their work at Year 1.

Overall, leadership and management are good and the senior management team is effective. Since the last inspection, the leaders have established good procedures in the core subjects for assessment and setting targets to recognise progress and this has improved achievement there. Improvement is weaker in some other subjects where these procedures are less effective. The accommodation is much improved since the last inspection and is an excellent base for presenting the curriculum and for meeting pupils' additional needs. The school is in a strong position to continue to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision for students in the sixth form is good and improving. They achieve well over a wide ranging curriculum individually tailored to help them become as independent as possible. Teaching is good and staff make good use of local colleges and work

experience placements to promote the skills and self-confidence required for full independence. The excellent new flat is especially well used for practising these skills. Students take nationally accredited awards that match well with their capabilities and interests. They say they like the sixth form very much because it helps them recognise and prepare well for what they want to do after they leave school. The absence of a common room limits the opportunity for students to socialise, properly welcome visitors to the sixth form and to create a more adult environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the accuracy of measuring learning outcomes and target setting in some subjects.
- Develop the role of the subject coordinators in providing support and advice to raise achievement in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are significantly below average because of pupils' learning difficulties. All pupils do well against their learning targets which are checked as appropriately challenging against the progress of others from equivalent schools nationally. Achievement is good. Pupils make the greatest progress in their personal, social and emotional development, in learning to behave appropriately and in their communication skills. In literacy, numeracy and in science, where there are good assessment and target setting procedures, the school adds good value to pupils' learning. Progress is not as good in some subjects where these procedures are less precise and therefore not as effective. Pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Over all the years, irrespective of the cause or severity of their learning difficulties, they continue to make good progress. Consequently, in Year 11 they are successful over a good range of accredited awards. For example, last year every pupil gained at least one unit of the Assessment and Qualification Authority (AQA) award or passes at entry or full levels of GCSE. Pupils are prepared well for entry to the sixth form, enrolment on college courses and for life after school. Parents and carers are pleased by pupils' good progress. One parent commenting on her daughter's reading said that she was 'thrilled because I never thought that she would ever be able to read'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding and a primary focus of the school's work. Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the outstanding gains pupils make towards becoming as independent as possible are the just results of the ethos of care and concern. Pupils form excellent relationships with

staff and participate fully in the very many planned opportunities to take responsibility. They act appropriately in different situations with different people. They readily and confidently speak with visitors, tell of their enjoyment of school, the fun they have in lessons and how pleased their teachers are when they try their best and succeed. They say they are looked after very well and feel very safe at school, and they behave excellently. They take pride in explaining how they eat healthily and how important their weekly swimming lessons are for keeping fit.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good because teachers and their assistants know their pupils very well and most often plan lessons that are relevant to them. Pupils like the staff very much and this means that they are comfortable as learners and enjoy working hard, to please themselves and their teachers. The teaching assistants are very competent and skilled and make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning. All staff use sign language, symbols and picture exchanges well and are adept at teaching according to a specific strategy, such as the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH).

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection. Interactive whiteboards, the internet and a wider range of specialist switches are all well used in helping make learning easier and more interesting. Classrooms are now much better places for both teaching and learning because they no longer restrict what can be taught or how teaching proceeds. In a small number of lessons in which teachers have little expertise or specialised knowledge in the subject, teaching is not wholly effective because the tasks do not always meet pupils' learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets all national requirements and pupils' additional needs. Pupils develop independence exceedingly well because of the very good programme for personal and social education and the focus on communication skills and on literacy and numeracy. For these subjects, planning is especially good, but it is not as good in the other subjects. This hinders learning especially when the lessons are taught by teachers with little specialist knowledge. The outstanding range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, summer schools and residential visits is more than that typically found in other equivalent schools. It adds substantially to pupils' learning experiences and provides excellent opportunities to develop their personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and enable pupils to fully attend to their learning and deal with their additional needs as they become more independent. Child protection, risk assessment and health and safety procedures are rigorously followed by all staff. Target setting procedures are very effective in promoting personal and social development and in helping learning especially in the core subjects. In these subjects, training in recognising when targets have been met results in staff making valid judgements of progress against P scales and National levels. This is helping leaders estimate the value the school adds to learning against the most relevant national data which in turn enhances guidance to pupils. The links with agencies, such as Connexions, and services, including the health and social services, provide excellent support for pupils and parents alike. The requirements in statements of special educational need are met in full, although more time with speech and language and physio and occupational therapists would benefit some pupils. Parents are quick to speak of the exceptional support provided in helping them understand and manage their children's needs. One parent commented 'I just don't think I would be able to cope at home without the ongoing advice and support of the school'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management overall are good. The burden created by the building programme on the effective running of the school was minimised by the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher. Difficult staffing issues have been substantially dealt with and staff morale is high. The skills and abilities of the senior managers complement each other very well and governors provide good support.

Despite the difficulties with accommodation there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The key issues have been substantially met and awards have been gained, such as the Arts Mark Gold award and centre status for the management and development of support staff. Self-evaluation has been enhanced by good assessment and target setting procedures that have been embedded into teaching and learning in the core subjects. These have provided accurate information and helped subject coordinators to raise achievement. Coordinators have been less effective at raising achievement in other subjects where procedures are not sufficiently accurate.

Extending the accommodation through the building programme has resulted in an increase in the number of pupils on roll substantially beyond the agreed admission number. The local authority recognises that it needs to reconcile this situation.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	**School Overall**	**16-19**

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	NA
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	No	No

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?	1	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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	1	

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?	1	1

[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	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for talking with us and for helping us find out about your school. We were impressed with what we saw and we agree with you that Welcombe Hills is a good school. We especially liked:

- the way you develop as young people, who take great pride in being as independent as possible
- the way staff and specialist visitors to the school help you become mature and responsible, to behave excellently and to become better at your learning
- the good progress you make in your learning because of the good teaching and the way you try very hard to do your best
- the way in which the headteacher and staff make sure that the school is a good place for learning, but where you can have fun and enjoyment also.

Your school could be even better if in a small number of lessons your teachers were better able to use information about how well you are doing in your work. This would mean they would plan even better lessons for you. Subject coordinators can help your teachers do this.