



Wakefield Pathways School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133340
Local Authority Wakefield
Inspection number 294074
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Kath Halifax

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Poplar Avenue
School category	Community special		Townville, Castleford
Age range of pupils	5–11		West Yorkshire WF10 3QJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01977 723085
Number on roll (school)	53	Fax number	01977 723088
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr S Groves
		Headteacher	Miss Yvonne Limb
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties. Most pupils have autism, and far more pupils have complex needs or autism than at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a small number of Chinese, mixed race and south-east Asian heritage. 40% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. In response to demand, a Foundation Stage was set up a year ago. At the time of the inspection, only one child was of this age and is working at an appropriate level with pupils in Key Stage 1. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award and is working towards gaining the National Autistic Society accredited standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Comments from parents such as 'an excellent school, well managed, very professional, always willing to help and offer support and advice' and 'my son's behaviour and attitude to school and life have changed radically' are representative of this outstanding school. The school has not rested on its laurels since the last inspection. Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported well by the governing body, have driven the school forward at a very good pace. Individual attainment has continued to improve despite the complexity of pupils' need rising. The accommodation has been refurbished to a high standard, providing better for the range of needs. Leaders are modest in their views of the school's effectiveness but are accurate in knowing what they do well and how the provision can be further improved.

The school is fortunate to be staffed by dedicated and skilled teachers and support assistants who are extremely successful in their work. Staff work hard to make learning relevant and meaningful. Their strong teamwork and knowledge of working with pupils with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly autism, is evidenced in the remarkable progress and achievement of pupils of all capabilities. Relationships are outstanding. Adults inspire pupils with confidence, providing activities that stretch pupils, encourage them to interact with others and promote confidence and independence. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It enables them to make excellent progress in their personal development, in making sense of the world, in living a safe, healthy life and in preparing for life outside school.

The curriculum is good. It is rich, relevant and matched very carefully to individual needs. The arrival of Foundation Stage children has necessitated change. This has been grasped with relish and considerable work has already been done linking the requirements of the curriculum for young children to the important programme for pupils with autism. Provision for communication, physical activity, information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), and music contribute considerably to pupils' well-being and achievement.

The excellent care, support and guidance given to pupils, parents and staff are at the heart of this flourishing school. As a result, attendance is good and pupils have a very positive attitude to school. They make good gains in understanding appropriate behaviour and are very tolerant of the idiosyncratic behaviours of their classmates. Parents appreciate the advice they are given in helping their children at home, commenting on the difference that, for example, the use of symbols and behaviour plans has made to home life. Leaders know that individual pupils are progressing extremely well. However, they are less clear about the overall progress of different groups of pupils and are therefore short of a small piece in the jigsaw for deciding what else to do to improve further.

A further outstanding feature of the school is the work supporting pupils with autism and complex needs in mainstream schools. A very well thought out programme of

visits to schools to provide for staff, parents and pupils, alongside the innovative short-term programme of bringing primary school pupils into Pathways, is very successful. As a result, a significant number of pupils stay in their neighbourhood schools. This makes a considerable contribution to the very good value for money provided by the school. Leaders are constantly investigating ways to make the school even better and how 'to do their very best for the next child through the door'. This places the school in a very good position to continue to progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse the progress made by different groups of pupils as an extra tool in ensuring that all groups of pupils are achieving as well as they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Though standards are low because of pupils' learning difficulties, pupils of all abilities make remarkable progress in their learning. The greatest gains are made in communication. Language is the focus of all activities. The spoken word is accompanied by skilled signing and the use of symbols, pictures and objects which enable pupils to understand and be understood. Pupils visibly grow in confidence as, sometimes for the first time, they make eye contact with a visitor, or wait for their turn to speak. In addition to daily literacy lessons, work using a picture exchange system enhances progress. Communication is imaginatively promoted in music lessons where pupils learn new signs at an amazing rate. Similarly, PSHCE is at the heart of every lesson. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and maturity. Pupils make very good progress in physical activities. The success of the programme of physical activity and relaxation at the start of each day is evident in pupils' ability to follow instructions and in their physical well-being. The introduction of a new science scheme has had a dramatic effect on pupils' progress, particularly in investigative science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

It is because of outstanding provision that pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. Exceptional relationships between pupils and adults engender trust, respect and self-belief. All daily routines are designed to promote confidence and independence. As a result, for instance, through a carefully planned programme, pupils who are noise intolerant make tremendous progress and are able to eat their meals in the large and busy dining room. Others tolerate sitting in close proximity to their classmates, joining in and contributing to discussions. The programme for PSHCE enables pupils to discover much more about their feelings and make sense of the world. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are generous fund-raisers and are community spirited. They recall with pride how they raised funds to help build a school in Sri Lanka and the success in the 'signing choir' at Wakefield Cathedral.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Some very good appointments of staff and very effective professional development have led to outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers and support staff are very skilled in working with pupils with a range of learning difficulties. Classrooms and planning are extremely well organised, affording time for pupils to work alongside each other as well as in their specially prepared learning bays. Not a moment is wasted in lessons and all pupils are challenged to succeed. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They understand how well they have done and are honest and realistic when awarding themselves points for their successes. Pupils' every success is recorded and used effectively to plan further work. Despite most pupils having complex needs and behaviours, a significant feature of all lessons is the calm, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are delighted and visibly grow in stature when adults praise them verbally or with a symbol card.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Leaders are continuously improving the good curriculum to match the needs of pupils: this is seen in the recently introduced Foundation Stage. Staff are conscious of the need to balance the structure necessary for pupils with autism with providing opportunities for choice and play. While this programme is still being fine-tuned, the setting up of the Sunflower Room contributes very well to all aspects of pupils' needs. Numerous specialist teaching areas such as the sensory room and art room are used to withdraw pupils for small-group or individual work which contributes considerably to all pupils' achievements. The well designed library is used effectively to extend pupils' literacy and social development. Pupils have access to daily physical activities that contribute to their health and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

From the day pupils are referred to the school, they receive outstanding care, support and guidance. Well thought out induction procedures enable pupils of all ages to settle quickly. Checks on health and safety are in place and procedures to protect pupils, including the most vulnerable, are known to all staff. Very close links between the school and other agencies contribute extremely well to pupils' well-being as well as allowing potential problems to be nipped in the bud. The tracking of individual pupils' progress and well-being is meticulous. Excellent individual education plans are clearly linked to the annual review of pupils' progress and shared with parents. Adults encourage pupils to refer to their special symbol targets to check how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Because staff recognise the trauma

presented by new situations for pupils with autism, transfer to secondary education is very well planned to allow pupils time to get used to the changes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has been paramount in the progress made by this vibrant school since the last inspection. Expertly assisted by the deputy headteacher and a teacher with expertise in autism, the school has responded very effectively to the changing needs of pupils, and to local and national initiatives. Subject managers and governors are now working more smartly and have adopted with enthusiasm the streamlined systems for monitoring the school's performance. Very good use is made of the wealth of data and staff expertise in ensuring that there are no weak subjects and that individual pupils are progressing exceptionally well. However, leaders have not pulled together fully how well they check on the progress of different groups such as those with autism, those with severe difficulties and those from different ethnic backgrounds.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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

I really enjoyed visiting your school, especially having lunch with you and watching you at play. It was good to see you having so much fun on the new swing. Thank you for spending time with me and showing me your work.

Pathways gives you an excellent education and lots of things are especially pleasing. These are the main ones.

- You have fun, work hard and are very well behaved.
- You make remarkable progress because your teachers plan work that is interesting and relevant to your needs.
- Communication, personal development, ICT, music and physical activities are real strengths.
- Adults are careful to make sure you are safe, well cared for and given good advice.
- The staff have very good links with other people who help you, such as health professionals.
- The work your teachers do to help pupils at other schools is outstanding.

This is what I have asked staff to do to make your school even better.

- Use all the information they have about your progress to check that different groups of pupils are doing as well as they can.

You can help by continuing to work hard and being so positive about learning. I wish you well for the future.