

Spring Brook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133368
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	294081
Inspection date	10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Ramsbottom
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Jones
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003
School address	Heron Street Oldham Lancashire OL8 4JD
Telephone number	0161 9115007
Fax number	0161 9115008

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Spring Brook School provides for pupils who have a statement of special educational need because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The great majority of pupils are boys and almost all are White and British. A very small minority of pupils are of mixed White and Caribbean heritage. English is the home language of all. The school also provides a part-time nurture class for vulnerable pupils aged five to seven from across the borough. In addition, it offers education to excluded pupils aged between 5 and 11 who are waiting for places in mainstream schools. The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school in a new building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Spring Brook is a good school. It is successful in helping pupils to improve their attitudes to learning and develop positive, personal and social qualities. This significantly enhances their future educational opportunities.

Achievement is good. On entry, pupils are below average. However, whatever their starting points, they respond to the supportive learning ethos of the school and make up much of the ground previously lost. There is no significant difference in the progress made by girls and boys or by pupils who are from different ethnic groups. Best progress is made in science in which a minority of pupils make outstanding progress. Achievement in English is less marked. However, in this subject, it is always at least satisfactory and for a minority it is good.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils learn to control their negative impulses. They show consideration to others. They know about healthy lifestyles and enjoy the sports and games the school offers. They understand and keep the rules that help them to stay safe in the classroom and the playground. Behaviour and attendance are good. Pupils feel at ease in school and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They know that their teachers and other staff members will always give them help if they need it. Pupils speak up for themselves very well through the school council. They feel that they have a real voice.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers know their pupils very well because of the rigour with which they assess their capabilities and personal characteristics. Planning is very thorough. Collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants is of a high standard and contributes to ensuring that learning time is used to the full.

The curriculum is outstanding. It fully meets external requirements. The content of lessons is exceptionally well matched to the needs of individual pupils. Those from other schools who attend the nurture group or who are awaiting a fresh placement after being excluded from their mainstream primary school are also given excellent opportunities to learn. The programme for learning outside the classroom is very extensive.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because the commitment of staff to promoting the health and safety of learners is translated into strong, positive, action. Measures to safeguard the pupils are in place and regularly reviewed. The school is excellent in overseeing the academic and personal progress made by its pupils and challenging them to do better. It consults with parents and works with them extremely well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very knowledgeable and has successfully steered the school through many changes. She has set its educational direction and helped it establish a role as a centre of expertise. She is well supported by the leadership team and staff. The school knows the progress that pupils have made from their starting points. However, it does not use this information to compare their performance with that of similar pupils elsewhere. While the school is largely accurate in its self-evaluation, the lack of such comparative data has led it to overestimate aspects of pupils' academic achievement. The school promotes inclusion very effectively. It is well managed and resources are used to best advantage. It works exceptionally well with outside agencies to ensure the well-being of its pupils, including those who are most vulnerable. Vetting procedures are thorough. Governance is good. The leadership is excellently placed to further improve the school, which gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Gain a more accurate understanding of pupils' achievement by comparing their progress with that of similar pupils in schools elsewhere.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties pupils have not fully benefited from their previous time in school. There are major gaps in their learning. Good teaching and effective adult encouragement helps them to focus on becoming better learners. They rapidly improve their skills and their progress is good overall. Most pupils learn best by doing. The effect of this is seen in the outstanding progress that they make in science in which much learning is strongly reinforced through practical work. By the end of Year 6 a significant minority of pupils reach or exceed the nationally expected level in science. Achievement is also good overall in mathematics. Pupils achieve well in aspects of English, particularly reading and speaking and listening. Written work is, however, satisfactory rather than good. Accuracy in writing, especially in spelling poses problems for a significant minority. Pupils make very good progress in personal, social and health and citizenship education. They do well in other subjects including French. They meet the challenging targets set for them in their personal education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond well to the provision the school makes for them. While individual pupils, especially those new to the school, are still prone to emotional outbursts and sometimes lose learning time, overall, they improve their emotional control and social awareness. They learn to concentrate in class, to behave safely in lessons and about the school, and to be aware of the needs of others. By becoming better learners and improving their skills they are preparing themselves well for future economic independence. Pupils enjoy the healthy food the school provides and know a good deal about healthy eating. They know that staying healthy means that they need to keep physically active. Outstanding enjoyment of school is seen in the full advantage pupils' take of the many opportunities to join in games or to practice outdoor pursuits. They particularly enjoy swimming, horse riding and the recent opportunities they have had to practice snowboarding at a winter sports centre. Pupils are clear that their teachers and other staff members will always give them help if they need it. Pupils speak up for themselves very well. They have played a role in changing the school uniform and in making sure that the end of term celebrations are held at a time when their parents can attend. They are helpful within the school community. With good adult support they begin to show consideration for others and come to appreciate and value beliefs and customs dissimilar to their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are well versed in the subjects that they teach. Their understanding of the special needs of their pupils is very good. They use this knowledge to prepare lessons that focus on individual needs. The practice of incorporating precise, planned therapeutic interventions into

lessons is good. Classroom resources are managed well. Teaching assistants know their roles and develop supportive relationships with pupils that aid their learning. Management of behaviour is good. Potential difficulties are recognised and de-escalation techniques are used effectively. Precise records of pupils' progress and personal development are kept. These are used to inform pupils' personal learning plans in which challenging targets are set. Primarily through dialogue, in which praise and encouragement are given, pupils are kept informed about their successes and what they must do to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent because, while not ignoring external requirements, it provides precisely the learning and personal development opportunities that the pupils need. Much of what is taught is related to carefully chosen themes. This helps pupils to gain greater understanding of what they learn. Lessons include individual therapeutic packages that address the specific learning needs of individuals. Good organisation enables the delivery of these to be dovetailed with the presentation of the main lesson themes. Enhancement of the curriculum through clubs and opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities is excellent. The carefully tailored provision made within the school for the nurture group and for excluded pupils is exceptionally good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All who work at the school are dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Arrangements for child protection are well established and regularly reviewed. The risks associated with practical and out of school activities are carefully assessed. Pupils' personal development and academic progress is very well monitored. Challenging targets are set and pupils are very well informed about the progress they are making towards these. Because of the guidance and support that they are given, pupils significantly improve their attitudes to learning and their behaviour. A very careful watch is kept over pupils who are especially vulnerable. Where necessary, the school acts decisively to organise the support of other agencies for pupils and families who need this. Parents are welcomed as partners in their children's education. Overwhelmingly they are supportive of the school and feel it is helping their children to become successful learners. There is no evidence to support the view of a very small minority that behaviour in school is unsatisfactory. The school extends its care, guidance and support to pupils enrolled elsewhere. It offers an excellent play therapy service to children who might benefit from this and a nurture group for vulnerable young pupils. It also supports excluded pupils very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership. She played a key role in planning the school's excellent new accommodation and in developing its role in support of other schools. The leadership team and all staff work hard to make the school as good as possible. The quality of teaching is closely monitored and good opportunities are provided so that all staff members can develop their skills and gain additional qualifications. Very good management ensures that the school runs smoothly and resources are used effectively and efficiently. The outreach

services provided by the school are very good and benefit many pupils in other settings. Mainstream schools who use these services regard them highly. The provision made within Spring Brook to support pupils from across the authority through a nurture group and individual play therapy is both innovative and an effective use of resources. The co-location of the school in premises shared with a mainstream primary school, and the extensive outreach services that it offers, strongly support the ideal of inclusion for its pupils. Governors are very supportive whilst rigorously carrying out their duty to hold the school to account. They are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, because the school does not take steps to compare the performance of its pupils with that of pupils elsewhere who also have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, it cannot be sure about where the strengths in the achievement of its pupils really lie.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
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

Inspection of Spring Brook School, Oldham, OL8 4JD

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when I inspected your school. I was really impressed by your good behaviour, especially during assembly and when you were having your lunch.

I must say a special thank you to those who came to speak to me. You told me such a lot about your school. Most importantly, you told me that you liked it and were pleased to come to school each day. I learned that some of you had been snowboarding and that others were getting on so well with horse riding that they could trot without the lead rein! You told me that you feel safe at school and that you have some say in things that are done. You said that you felt more at ease at Spring Brook than at your previous schools.

During my day in your school I found out that you are becoming good learners and that you are doing well in your work. Some of you are doing brilliantly. You are well taught by teachers who understand you and who give you interesting things to do. They tell you how you are getting on. When you are in the classroom you try hard and are well behaved. You know that there is someone to help you if you get a little worked up or if things go wrong. Most of you are good attenders and come to school whenever you can. I noticed that some of you are considerate to others and care a lot about your school. You are taken care of very well and all the staff work hard to keep you safe. Your school is well led and managed and is obviously going to get even better.

To help your headteacher and your teachers make the school better I have asked them to compare your achievements with those of boys and girls in similar schools across the country. This will give them a clearer idea of what you are doing very well and what you should do better.

Thank you once again for your help and good luck for the future.