



North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 134885
Local Authority Leeds
Inspection number 294203
Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Tongue Lane
School category	Community special		Meanwood, Leeds
Age range of pupils	2–19		West Yorkshire LS6 4QE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0113 3368270
Number on roll (school)	201	Fax number	0113 2783577
Number on roll (6th form)	44		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Malcolm Kleiman MBE
		Headteacher	Mr Michael Purches
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2–19	6–7 November 2006	294203

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This new school makes provision for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. Over 30% of the pupils on roll are included for part or all of their education in mainstream schools. Recent staff restructuring enables the school to provide specific expertise to meet the individual needs of pupils well. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is significantly higher than the national average. There are a large number of looked after children. The number of pupils from minority ethnic families where English is not the spoken language is high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Upon opening in January 2005 the principal inherited a huge budget deficit. He has successfully clawed it back without compromising the quality of education for the pupils. Staff reductions have been skilfully managed, achievement has been raised and an increased number of pupils have been provided with opportunities to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools. A small number of pupils achieve remarkable academic success as a result of this strategy. A staffing structure has been put in place to shape three distinct 'Centres of Excellence' to provide support for pupils with autism, very profound learning difficulties, and challenging behaviour across north west Leeds. The vast majority of parents are thrilled with what this school achieves for their children. However, a small number of parents are angry about the staff cuts that have resulted in increased numbers of pupils in classes. Communication with these parents is not always as sharp and effective as it could be. This is exacerbated by pupils' progress reports not always being written in parent friendly language. Reports do not always inform parents about the magical moments of achievement in their children's lives. For example, breakthrough moments such as a turn of the head in response to a particular stimulus provided, or the gorgeous smile which cries out, 'I am comfortable in this position'. This type of progress is regarded understandably by these parents as far more important at this stage than achievement in literacy or numeracy.

The rapid gains the vast majority of pupils make in communication and independence lie at the heart of this successful school. There is a determination on the part of staff that all pupils who are capable of entering the world of work when they reach adulthood will have the necessary skills to do so. The school is effective in meeting this aim. Teaching is good and focuses on developing important life skills. Looked after children and those from families where English is not the first language achieve well. Overall, pupils with the most complex needs are stimulated in lessons and make good progress. There are rare occasions, though, when some of these pupils are left sitting passively without targeted intervention and support from teaching assistants. On these occasions they under perform. During the inspection pupils who benefit from using the hydrotherapy pool did so. This requires one-to-one support. Some parents are legitimately concerned that this does not always happen as it should because teaching assistants required for this activity are deployed elsewhere in the school. Inspectors agree with their point. Feeding programmes are managed satisfactorily but insufficient attention is paid to focusing on lunch time as a curriculum opportunity to develop pupils' social and independence skills. Nonetheless, achievement is good overall and the school provides good value for money.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school. Overwhelmingly, they have positive attitudes to learning. All are included in physical exercise. Pupils in wheelchairs are enthralled as they dance to music. Healthy diets are provided, including very specialist provision of food for those pupils with complex medical needs. Overall, the quality of care is good. Guidance given to those pupils capable of entering the world of work is a particular strength.

The newly established leadership team has already successfully implemented its plans for significant change which has improved the quality of provision for pupils in many areas of school life and raised achievement. Mainstream schools value the support and advice they are given from staff of this school. It enables them to meet better the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in their schools. Capacity for improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision is good. A rich curriculum and good accreditation opportunities ensure students make good progress and achieve well. Students make rapid gains in independence and learn important life skills. They are skilful communicators and express themselves confidently. Links with college are good. High expectations that the majority of students will enter the workforce are met. Personalised programmes are matched to need and those students capable of doing so are encouraged to travel independently using the bus and train. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leadership and management are good. There are fewer students with complex needs than lower down the school, a legacy from the time when more students with moderate learning difficulties were placed in special schools. However, the requirements of those few students with complex needs are also met well and they are fully included in learning experiences alongside their peers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Deploy teaching assistants consistently in lessons to ensure that no pupil is ever left sitting passively but is always engaged in suitable learning experiences.
- Ensure that sufficient teachers and teaching assistants are available at lunch time to support pupils develop important social and independent skills whilst eating their dinner.
- Improve communication with parents by providing them with a meeting to learn about their children's progress each year in addition to the annual review and ensure that reports are written in parent friendly language.
- Enable pupils who benefit from being free from pain when they are in the hydrotherapy pool to experience this activity regularly by targeting sufficient staff to ensure it happens.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good overall. Throughout the school the vast majority of pupils make good progress in English, communication, mathematics and science. As pupils with autism gain confidence in making their needs known, they become less anxious. Many are successfully included in mainstream schools because of the good progress they make. One such pupil said with enormous pride, 'I never knew I would get this far.'

Overall, parents of children with very complex needs are delighted with the very small stepped gains they make in communicating their wants and needs. Achievement in independence is outstanding for many pupils. Children under five make good progress. Those in Key Stage 4 develop important life and work-related skills exceptionally well. A significant strength is the good progress made by looked after children because of the high quality support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They have positive attitudes to learning. This is aptly summed up by a parent who said, 'When the pick up bus arrives at my home my child becomes excited and shouts school is wicked.' Behaviour is good. Bullying is rare and when it occurs it is sorted quickly. Racial harmony is outstanding. Attendance is satisfactory. Some pupils are absent from school for long periods whilst they receive hospital treatment. The majority of pupils understand the importance of eating healthy foods and taking regular exercise to keep fit. Pupils express their views through review time at the start and end of the day, but there is not a school council to enable them to make important decisions about school life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Aromatherapy supported by soft lighting and quality music is calming for pupils who are distressed and in pain. The commitment to raising pupils' awareness of cultural diversity through rich sensory experiences such as pupils smelling and tasting foods typically eaten by a range of ethnic groups is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Typically teaching is good. Teachers know pupils' learning difficulties and plan well to meet them. Their good use of signing and pictures enables pupils to communicate choices independently. This is a particularly strong feature of teaching in the Foundation Stage. Skilful behaviour management enables pupils with the most challenging behaviour to stay on task and make good progress. Interesting activities matched to pupils' needs provide them with good challenge and so stretches them well in their learning. Very good use is made of information and community technology to develop pupils' communication skills. On rare occasions, teaching assistants are not effectively deployed to support pupils and when this happens the pace of learning drops. Sometimes the hydrotherapy pool is not used to provide therapeutic support needed for pupils because there are not enough teaching support assistants available. Individual education plans are used well to track pupils' progress and to inform teachers' planning to raise achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It is flexible and planned well to meet pupils' needs. The curriculum for children under five is good. Innovative tailor-made programmes enable pupils with autism to develop strategies to cope with anxiety when faced with unfamiliar situations. Consequently, many of these pupils are able to work successfully with their peers in mainstream schools. A sensory curriculum enables pupils with the most complex needs to be fully included in rich learning experiences alongside more able peers. Culturally sensitive visual resources are used effectively to support the teaching of pupils from family backgrounds where English is not the spoken language. Vocational courses and work experience are significant strengths. The curriculum is relevant and develops pupils' life and work-related skills very well. It promotes independence: the most able pupils are successfully encouraged to find their own way to college on the bus. This prepares them well to get to work independently and on time when they leave school. Good use is made of visits to enhance the curriculum, but the range of clubs at lunch time is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils say, 'We feel safe at school'. Risk assessments are thorough. However, on occasions insufficient teaching assistants are deployed to support the most vulnerable pupils with their feeding programmes at lunch time. Effective links with a range of external agencies support pupils very well. Careers guidance for those pupils who have the potential to enter the world of work is outstanding. There is excellent support from the local authority for looked after children. Pupils' academic progress and social skills development are tracked well. However, some parents say, 'More attention is paid to how well our children do in English and mathematics rather than what really matters to us such as how they are enabled to be pain free whilst enjoying the hydrotherapy pool.' These parents say, 'Reports about how well our children are doing are not always parent friendly'. A significant, but small proportion of parents say, 'We would like a formal meeting with the teachers apart from the annual review to find out more about what really matters to us.' Inspectors agree with their point of view.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Governors support the principal's vision and clear sense of direction effectively. There is good analysis of pupils' performance and

decisive action is taken to drive up standards. Until recently, the senior leaders had too much to manage. Recent creative and innovative staff restructuring has put in place a layer of middle leaders to drive important initiatives to raise pupils' achievement. Their work has already started to make significant improvements that benefit the pupils. The learning environment has improved, more pupils are successfully included alongside their peers in mainstream schools, and the principal has been freed up to focus on the 'big picture'. Systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning are good and result in decisive action to improve provision. Due to the time and energy spent leading priorities on many fronts, communication with parents has not at all times been as effective as it should have been. Staff have not always been consistently managed to ensure that lunch time is an exciting time for the most vulnerable pupils. The governing body works in an effective partnership with the local authority to act as a good critical friend to the principal. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities well.

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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	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	NA	NA

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	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	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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.

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

We greatly enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We are delighted with the enthusiasm you have for learning. It was so good to speak with your parents and teachers.

What we judge to be good about your school.

- The good progress you make in communicating your needs, because of the good teaching you receive.
- The good progress you make in English, mathematics and science.
- The way in which you are supported to keep fit and healthy.
- The skills you develop to help you to get a job when you leave school.
- The opportunities so many of you experience to work with children in other schools.
- The good leadership provided by your principal and your dedicated teachers.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that those of you who have the greatest difficulties are supported at all times by your teaching assistants.
- That the school becomes better at telling your parents about how well you do.
- That lunch time becomes a special occasion for all of you and that it helps you to develop the skills required to eat your food, as far as is possible, by yourselves.
- Ensure that all of you who benefit from going into the hydrotherapy pool have the opportunity to do so.