

# Morecambe Road School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119876
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	301661
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Atkinson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	158
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lilian Shaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Clayton Jackson (Acting Head)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Morecambe Road Morecambe Lancashire LA3 3AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 414384
<b>Fax number</b>	01524 426339

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Morecambe Road is a large community school for pupils with learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. In recent years, the school has admitted an increasing number of pupils identified as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder or with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The pupil population is from Morecambe and the surrounding areas and a large number of pupils travel a long distance. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and none whose first language is not English. There are four looked-after children. The percentage of pupils who qualify for free school meals is above average. The school has experienced a significant number of recent changes in the senior leadership team and a new headteacher has been appointed for September 2007.

## 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 that gives good value for money. Despite the many changes in leadership at all levels due to illness and retirement, the school provides a good quality of education and has made good improvement since the last inspection. Parents are very happy with the education their children receive and are thrilled with the improvements in their children's behaviour, attitude and achievements. As one parent commented, 'The staff work incredibly hard to give children the very best chance in confidence, achievement and independence'. Pupils share this view and comment powerfully on how safe and secure they feel. The outcome is reflected in the extent to which they enjoy and participate in the wide range of learning and social opportunities that is available to them. Pupils receive very good personal care and support and have good relationships with adults, whom they trust and respect.

While standards are low because of individuals' learning difficulties, pupils' achievements are good. On entry, their needs are quickly assessed and an individual education plan is developed to meet their needs through specific interventions and high levels of support. The very youngest pupils make rapid progress because of the skilled teaching, high expectations and additional support to enable them to make small but significant steps forward in communication and personal and social development. The majority of other pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), even though for some it is in small steps. Whilst the school tracks pupils' progress using a nationally recognised small steps approach, this information is not consistently analysed by teachers to support their planning of the next steps in pupils' learning.

Pupils make good progress in their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because of the emphasis given to equipping them with the skills to become successful young people. The school is successful in increasing pupils' independence and developing new skills in areas that many would have previously avoided because of a fear of failure. As a result, pupils realise they have more strengths than they imagined and it is not surprising that attendance is good. Pupils have positive attitudes, behave well and help each other to do better.

Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively as teams, leading to pupils receiving individual attention with their learning. Where teaching is consistently good, it is because the planning is detailed, the intended learning outcomes are clear and the expectations are high. The outcome is that the pace is fast, everyone is clear about what is to be done and pupils make good progress. However, the planning of learning activities for pupils is not always matched accurately to what different ability groups are capable of. The staff have very good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour effectively, which results in a positive learning atmosphere where pupils want to work hard and do well. The curriculum is good because of the ways in which it is adapted to meet the personal needs of pupils and introduces them to new experiences. The enrichment activities benefit pupils enormously in developing their interests outside of school and extending their appreciation of other cultures. The setting of individual targets is effective in giving pupils goals to aim for. Although praise is used well, opportunities are missed when marking pupils' work to guide pupils on how to improve and reach the next steps in their learning.

The good quality of the school's provision is a direct result of the effective systems and routines that have led to the school being well managed. The governors have provided strong and committed leadership in a period of change and, as a result, there is a clear vision for the future

of the school. Performance management is very rigorous and staff are very well supported with their own professional development. The current leadership team is focused on ensuring that individual pupils achieve their potential and its members agree that whole school systems should be implemented more consistently. They monitor the work thoroughly and identify the important things that need to be done. However, the self-evaluation judgements are inconsistent with the evidence and the school is actually performing better. Given the commitment of the staff and the governors' recruitment of key new appointments, the capacity to improve further is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Consistently use the information about what pupils are capable of to plan suitable learning activities.
- Give clear guidance to pupils about how they can reach the next steps in their learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science and ICT. They make good progress against individual targets, particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2 where staff are very much aware of what pupils have to do next. Progress is regularly tracked using a nationally recognised 'small step' approach and accurate assessments lead to the rate of progress being clearly measured and monitored. Pupils make good progress in their personal and social development because of the good opportunities to develop team skills. Key Stage 4 students build on the good progress made in Key Stage 3 to gain good results in mathematics and art and design at GCSE and in Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) examinations in a number of other subjects. Older students also make good progress in their independence skills and are well prepared for the future through the successful completion of the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award and a two-week work placement.

Pupils achieve very well in creative subjects, particularly in music and art and design. The school performs a number of its own productions each year to a good standard and, given that pupils had very limited skills when they started the school, this represents very good progress. They also achieve well in physical education where there is a strong emphasis on promoting confidence in team games, participating in outdoor activities and exercising regularly. Children in the Foundation Stage have a flying start to their education and make good progress in all areas of learning because of the expertise of the staff and the ways in which they plan for individual needs. As a result, children make significant early gains in their communication skills, which open the doors for other ways of learning.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and work hard in all activities. Pupils are growing in confidence and self-worth and are eager to improve. They say that they feel very safe and that bullying is not a problem. Strong, positive relationships promote mutual trust between pupils and adults. Pupils look after one another; they are happy to welcome newcomers and show them how the routines work. Members of the friendship gang in the primary phase and peer buddies further up the school are always ready to help others during playtimes. Pupils of all ages demonstrate

a shared understanding about how to keep safe and lead healthy lives. They develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are proud to explain how they are involved in reviewing their progress and deciding what their next targets should be. They take care of the school environment and appreciate how much the local community and their families value them and their school. Their personal skills and growing independence fit them well for each phase of their education and older students look forward optimistically to the available opportunities in education, employment and training.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and work well as teams to engage and motivate pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons, become more confident about their abilities and really try to improve. Lessons are well structured and staff try to make learning interesting and fun. Teachers do not always make enough use of the information they have about what pupils are capable of to plan well-matched activities. As a result, some work is either too difficult or too easy and limits pupils' progress. There are high expectations of behaviour, clear routines and rules, and staff ensure that pupils receive good support to help them overcome any difficulties. In all classrooms, there is a good ethos for learning where pupils feel challenged yet confident to ask for help when needed. A growing strength in Key Stages 1 and 2 is how teachers are involving pupils in assessing how well they are doing and this leads to them being more aware of their next steps.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It contributes effectively to pupils' good achievement and supports their understanding of the relevance of the different subjects to everyday life. The provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is enriched by many opportunities for investigations and other practical learning experiences. Teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable for the pupils and work to establish effective links across subjects. Pupils learn about the faiths, cultures, foods and traditions of people in other countries and benefit from a wide range of cultural experiences through working alongside skilled artists and musicians. Pupils say how much they enjoy visits to places of interest to support their learning. Residential visits and work towards the Duke of Edinburgh award are valued highly. Older pupils have good experience of work in the community and get a real taste for what life is like outside of school. There are many enrichment activities, including sports and the arts, and pupils are helped to take responsibility for their own learning through developing their personal interests.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care and support are good. Parents are quick to praise how well pupils are helped to settle quickly into the calm routines and structures for learning. Teachers and support staff work closely with parents and other agencies to the social and academic benefit of all pupils. The school ensures child protection procedures are in place and there is a rigorous approach to risk assessment. Pupils are all involved in their annual reviews and feel their views are listened to.

Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils have a strong sense of ownership of their personal targets and are becoming independent learners. These new strategies are being developed in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that older students take even more responsibility for planning their own learning than has been the pattern until this year. Teachers use praise well when giving written or oral feedback but are not clear enough in their guidance about what pupils need to do to move to the next step in their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and carefully monitor the finances. They provide good strategic leadership, have a clear vision for the school and take tough decisions when necessary. As a result, key appointments have been made and a full leadership team will be in place for September 2007. The current senior leadership team manages the school well and generally maintains consistent routines and systems. The team has been extended to give more staff opportunities to lead initiatives and take responsibility for shaping the direction of the school. Performance management is very strong and leads to good professional development opportunities for all staff. The outcome is that staff feel valued, morale is high and there is a clear sense of purpose for the future.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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
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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morecambe Road School, Morecambe, LA3 3AB.

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to visit Morecambe Road. We were very impressed by your behaviour and attitudes towards school and work. You all seemed to enjoy school and were rightly very proud of your achievements and the wide range of activities you are involved in. We soon discovered from our discussions with you and the staff why you do well.

- The staff work very well as a team to look after you and are always prepared to listen to and support you.
- You quickly make good progress in your learning because you work hard, have good attitudes and want to do well.
- The school is a very safe place where you are happy and relaxed.

It is clear to us that you are now more confident than you were and staff and your parents told us of how much improvement you had made and continue to make. We know that the staff at the school want you to be successful and they are the main reason that you have such a good time at Morecambe Road. We discussed with the acting headteacher how the school could help you to improve. We agreed that staff will plan activities that are more closely matched to what you are capable of and give you clearer advice about how to reach the next steps in your learning.

However, the most important thing is that you continue to be as positive and enthusiastic as you were during our visit. You made us realise what can be achieved through hard work, big efforts and listening to good advice.

Thank you and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Atkinson (Lead Inspector) and Heather Evans (Team Inspector)