

Mayfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112464
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	301662
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
6th form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Davies
Headteacher	Mrs S Leathers
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Moresby Road Hensingham Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 8TU
Telephone number	01946 852676
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Mayfield is a school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils also have autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, broadly representative of the locality. About a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Nearly all pupils are White British; five are looked after by the local authority. This year there are no children in the Foundation Stage.

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. Its promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being of pupils and the care, support and guidance they have are outstanding. These are major strengths of the school and are the two aspects of the school's work which parents feel are most important. The vast majority of parents express deep gratitude for them being central to the school's ethos. The school is much loved by parents and pupils. It has a very good reputation in the area. This is the result of good leadership, management and governance, which have ensured ongoing improvement over many years and put the school in a good position to keep improving.

Pupils have a very wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This means that they cannot meet the national expectations for pupils in mainstream schools. All pupils make good progress because they are well taught and have a keen appetite for learning. Teachers present them with work that is well matched to their individual needs. They can do this because assessment of the pupils' learning and personal development is excellent. Teachers are experienced and skilled in many fields of expertise but, occasionally, they do not give pupils enough time to demonstrate what they can do on their own. Pupils have extensive opportunities to have fun and to learn outside the classroom. Many exciting visits, competitions and clubs contribute enormously to pupils' enjoyment of school and the progress they make. In class, teachers are often quick to spot opportunities to promote number and literacy skills but the curriculum is not routinely planned to include such opportunities in every lesson.

Pupils behave very well and there is no evidence of bullying or harassment. This creates a climate in which pupils thrive, are safe and are happy to attend whenever they can. There is a little adolescent naughtiness and very rare instances of more serious misbehaviour, which are invariably the result of recognised and assessed problems associated with autism. A strong programme of personal, social and health education and extensive opportunities for pupils to take physical exercise contribute enormously to pupils' excellent awareness of the importance of living healthily. There is a tremendous sense of community within the school. Pupils frequently make sensible suggestions about changes they would like to see and these are often followed up to the benefit not only of themselves, but also to staff, parents and local people. Many pupils face uncertain futures but the progress they make in their learning and their outstanding personal development stands them in good stead for having successful lives when they leave school. Staff work with many other professionals to try to ensure that all pupils' needs are met and that they can do as well as they can. There is also close and regular contact with parents, who are fully involved with their children in making important decisions about the future. The effective promotion of equality of opportunity includes a good and growing programme of opportunities for pupils to share part of their school time in mainstream schools.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Post-16 students achieve well. In most respects their personal development is outstanding but their timetable is very full of activities planned by adults. This slightly reduces opportunities for students to learn how to act on their own initiative. Students are well taught and show interest and enthusiasm in class and in the good range of activities provided outside the school. Many students participate successfully in extended periods of work experience and follow courses in local colleges. This gives them valuable opportunities to mix with people outside

their own school. Extra courses have been added to the curriculum this year. These allow students to gain a wider range of nationally recognised qualifications than in the past.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that introductions to lessons give pupils enough time to complete tasks with growing degrees of independence.
- Review the curriculum to identify a wider range of situations in which pupils can learn more about key skills, whatever the subject being taught.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Virtually all parents feel their children are making good progress. Many pupils are admitted at the very earliest stages of learning and personal and social development. The nature of their difficulties means that a small minority remain close to this position throughout the school. More commonly, pupils make good progress year after year, with the result that nearly all gain some form of nationally recognised accreditation in English, mathematics and information and communication technology before they leave. These qualifications equate to attainment at about Level 1 or 2 of the National Curriculum and occasionally Level 3 in mathematics. Post-16 students achieve well, allowing most to successfully complete ASDAN challenges at bronze or silver level.

Pupils cannot attain national standards but they achieve well. They meet most of their well-judged targets. These set a good degree of challenge and are regularly reviewed. They take good account of accurate assessment data, the wishes of parents, the advice of many professionals and, whenever possible, the views of the pupils themselves. During the inspection, pupils made good progress in nearly all lessons. Occasionally they might have made even better progress if they had been left a little more time to complete tasks.

Over a year ago assessments suggested that, in English, primary aged pupils with autism were not making as much progress as other pupils. Management responded very effectively by introducing more training and helping staff to adapt to the needs of these pupils. As a result, there are now no signs of underachievement among this or of any other group of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, rests at the heart of the school. This is the area of its work that is of paramount importance to most parents and they are extremely happy with the outcomes because they are greatly improving their children's prospects of well-being on leaving school. Parents say their children enjoy school and this is abundantly clear to any visitor. Attendance is good. The complexity of many pupils' medical needs results in absence being slightly higher than the national average but they come to school whenever they can. Behaviour is outstanding. This reflects pupils' excellent social and moral development and contributes enormously to pupils' feelings of security, their safety and their enjoyment of school. There is no suggestion of any bullying or harassment. In the words of a parent, 'Mayfield pupils do not know what bullying

is'. Many pupils have fragile constitutions but all are encouraged to lead robust, healthy lives. They respond by participating enthusiastically in physical exercise and developing healthy habits. The school has won many accolades for promoting health and activity and is bidding to become a Specialist Sport's College. Pupils come from a very wide geographical area and a huge range of backgrounds but at Mayfield they all feel important members of a very select community. They know that their suggestions are keenly listened to and that they, as individuals, can help shape the future for others. The way in which pupils develop insights into their own circumstances and the way they show concern and understanding for other pupils' problems reflect outstanding spiritual development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good teaching results in pupils achieving well. Lessons are carefully planned to make sure that each individual has work they can do with as much independence as possible. At the same time staff ensure that those who need it get the support they need. This is because they pay rigorous attention to assessing pupils' work and progress very accurately and put the information gained to good use. On some occasions teachers tend to override their planning. When this happens, lesson introductions are too long, teachers do not involve classroom assistants enough and do not leave pupils with enough time to complete planned tasks. Misbehaviour is rarely a problem because teachers are quick to recognise the early signs of discontent and very skilled in preventing any escalation. Classroom assistants are given clear guidance about their roles and work very effectively with individuals and small groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It has been strengthened since the last inspection by increasing the number of courses leading to accreditation, thus allowing pupils' achievements to be more widely recognised and setting a firmer foundation for their future economic well-being. In good recognition of pupils' most pressing needs, there is a strong focus on promoting pupils' personal, social and health education. Generous time is allocated to the teaching of basic skills, especially number, literacy and communication but care is taken not to let these essential areas of the curriculum erode the time for pupils to learn about all the other subjects of the National Curriculum. Opportunities are sometimes missed to further promote essential basic skills. This is because curriculum planning does not routinely identify how each subject can make the maximum contribution to the development of pupils' basic skills. Pupils love the wide range of activities which take learning out of the classroom, promote their personal development and add fun to learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Exceptional care is taken to ensure pupils are kept safe and well looked after. This is of huge comfort to parents and contributes enormously to pupils' sense of well-being. Potential risk in any activities is very carefully assessed and the school gives a very high priority to maintaining the health and safety of pupils. As pupils progress through the school, great care is taken to prepare them for changes in class groups and teachers. The school gives pupils excellent advice about their future options as they get older. Staff check the individual progress of pupils frequently and accurately. This enables the staff to consult with parents and a wide range of professionals to resolve problems if they detect any slowing of progress. The school has detailed intervention and positive behaviour plans. These contain excellent advice which helps staff manage pupils who are identified as having greater than average difficulty in managing their own behaviour. This prevents these pupils from getting into trouble and ensures the safety of everyone.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. Changes in leadership are imminent as the long-standing and very effective headteacher retires in three weeks time. The changes have been well managed, with a good contribution from governors, to ensure a smooth transition as the deputy headteacher takes over. The school has yet to appoint a new deputy headteacher. Mayfield has a good reputation in the area. Staff enjoy working there. Nearly all parents feel the school is well led and managed and appreciate the way the school communicates with them and involves them in their children's education. The careful and good quality monitoring of teaching allows good advice to be given to help raise performance. Many pupils enjoy arrangements which allow them to spend time in mainstream schools. The school gives good value for money. Resources are well used but the best use is not always made of classroom assistants, particularly in the early stages of lessons.

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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>	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 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	Yes	Yes

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	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	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?	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mayfield School, Whitehaven, CA28 8TU

It was a real pleasure to visit your school the other day. You made me very welcome and it was good to see you working so hard and being on your best behaviour. Thank you.

I visit schools to look at all sorts of things, point out the good bits and make suggestions about things that could be better.

Mayfield is a good school. I can say this with confidence because it is very clear that you learn a lot. This is because you are well taught and you work hard. You are also extremely well looked after by staff and this helps make the school a safe and happy place. It is obvious that you enjoy attending school regularly.

I am asking teachers to keep an eye on how much time they spend talking to you at the start of lessons, to make sure they leave you with enough time to do all the work they set you and to make sure you use your English and mathematical skills in all lessons.

I would like to wish you good luck for the future.

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector