

Hillside School, Longridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131479
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	301663
Inspection dates	19–20 April 2007
Reporting inspector	John Atkinson

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Hargreaves
Headteacher	Mr Geoff Fitzpatrick
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Ribchester Road Longridge Preston Lancashire PR3 3XB
Telephone number	01772 782205
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hillside School is a school for pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) identified as their predominant learning difficulty. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The percentage of those entitled to free school meals is broadly similar to the national average. There are ten pupils from minority ethnic groups and two pupils do not have English as their first language. There are two looked after children. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The school achieved Specialist School and Academies Trust status for communication and interaction in 2006. There is an Outreach Team working to support pupils with ASD in the community and mainstream schools. The team provides support and training to staff in mainstream schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hillside is an outstanding school that gives very good value for money and has made significant improvement since its last inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school because their specific needs are fully understood and met through the coordinated efforts and expertise of a very committed staff team. The highly structured and supportive learning environment enables pupils with significant communication and interaction difficulties to make very good progress in their learning, and outstanding progress in their personal development. Very thorough personal learning programmes are implemented systematically. The outcome is that, over time, pupils achieve their learning targets, make outstanding improvements in their behaviour and acquire vastly improved social and communication skills. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive not only of what the school does for their children, but what it does for them. As one parent commented, 'I am absolutely confident that my child is safe, well looked after and happy. I am relieved.'

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the extremely positive ethos of the school are key factors in the school's successes. The headteacher has the drive and vision to continually move the school forward, constantly expecting the highest possible standards of care and education for the pupils. The governing body is a vibrant and representative group which systematically supports and challenges the school. Its successful recruitment of new senior leaders has had an immediate positive impact, particularly in the use of electronic record keeping and in promoting new initiatives in the curriculum.

Pupils make outstanding progress in the majority of their identified targets. Given their very challenging behaviours and complex needs, pupils learn to follow instructions and routines very well and make significant progress in modifying their behaviour. As a result, pupils access many more learning and social opportunities and the benefits are fully recognised by parents. As one proudly said, 'The things my son is now doing far exceed any expectations I had.' Provision in the Foundation Stage is good with many strengths and children make a good start to their education. Their needs are thoroughly assessed and specific interventions, using different communication and sensory techniques, are used very effectively. Individuals make very good progress in the basic skills of communication and numeracy because of the precision teaching they receive. The senior leadership team and class teachers monitor and track pupil progress using a nationally recognised 'small step' approach and any delay or slowing down of progress is quickly identified and tackled. Teaching is consistently strong and effective; it is outstanding overall. Teachers plan meticulously on how to establish the right conditions for learning by using specialist techniques to excellent effect. As a result, even the most challenging pupils are making very good progress in their targets.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and is key to their enjoyment of the opportunities available at school and in the community. Parents are very complimentary of the impact of what the school does in giving their children the skills and confidence to engage in new experiences with a higher level of social competence. The emphasis on independence and being able to participate in group activities is very successful and influential in preparing pupils for the future.

The curriculum is outstanding because of the way it is adapted to meet individual personal needs. The array of exciting events and activities such as theme weeks, residential trips, visits and visiting artists, make a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. The curriculum is tailored to addressing the behavioural, social and learning needs of all pupils. The school recognises the need for further developments in accrediting aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum in preparation for pupils' progression to post-16 training and education. The care and support that pupils receive is outstanding and reflects the school's total dedication to every child. Pupils receive very clear guidance about appropriate behaviour and regular feedback on progress towards targets.

The school's overall success is a reflection of its inclusive strategies. It has excellent links with a wide range of external services and agencies. It has excellent links with mainstream schools and provides excellent support to those who seek it. As a result, many pupils are able to return to mainstream schools with the confidence and skills that enable them to succeed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Investigate all options for accrediting the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in communication skills and learn how to interact more appropriately. They make very good progress against challenging targets in the key skills of literacy and numeracy and are given good support and advice about what to do next to achieve their targets. Progress is systematically tracked using a nationally recognised 'small step' approach. Results are analysed very carefully and personal learning programmes are modified accordingly. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development, particularly in their social development and in being able to interact more appropriately. The impact of this is demonstrated in the good work-related skills that they develop.

Pupils achieve very well in creative subjects such as music and art. They also achieve very well in some aspects of physical education, particularly swimming. Pupils with complex communication and learning difficulties make good progress, particularly when taught using specialist techniques that use sensory experiences, symbols and pictures to structure their learning activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very positive ethos is underpinned with well-established routines leading to pupils feeling very secure and relaxed. This enables them to enjoy many more social experiences and make good relationships with other pupils and adults. Individual health, physical well-being and diet are a top priority of the school because of the relationship to pupils' needs and the impact on learning. The outstanding handling programmes ensure that pupils are helped to remain as calm as possible, resulting in a safe and secure environment where pupils are comfortable, relaxed and happy. The school fosters pupils' participation in community activities, often challenging them to engage in events that are new and potentially unnerving yet lead to giving pupils greater self-confidence. Overall attendance is excellent with very few absences. The positive behaviour reward systems are implemented consistently and lead to an ethos where pupils feel totally safe and respected. Pupils are actively involved in projects with local schools and groups, resulting in excellent progress in their social development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching has many strengths and leads to significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils take full advantage of stimulating learning opportunities leading to substantial improvements in their interaction and communication skills. Staff are meticulous in implementing pupils' personal plans and succeed in establishing a firm foundation whereby pupils build upon their stable behaviour and acquire new skills in many areas of the curriculum. Staff have high expectations of pupils and make excellent use of a wide range of resources to meet pupils' different needs and learning styles. Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together as a team. They use specialist communication and sensory techniques very effectively to successfully engage all pupils and ensure maximum participation in all activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and its enrichment are outstanding. Pupils have full access to the national curriculum. All learning activities are suitably adapted so that the personal needs of pupils are fully met. The excellent opportunities for work related experiences ensure that all older pupils have a personal programme tailored to their specific needs. The school makes excellent use of external services and with collaborative and meticulous planning ensures that suitable work experience placements are available to all Key Stage 4 pupils. Further developments in accrediting aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum in preparation for pupils' post-16 training and education are required. Excellent use is made of local amenities and resources and results in pupils of all ages participating in a variety of experiences that contribute very effectively in enhancing their social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support of pupils is outstanding. Planning of pupils' individual support programmes is meticulous and risk assessment and support and intervention plans are very sophisticated. As a result the arrangements to safeguard children are exceptional. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are very securely in place. Pupils receive excellent guidance from all staff about how to behave and interact in a socially acceptable way. The outcome is that pupils are increasingly aware of how they can manage their own behaviour and recognise how to make better relationships with others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's visionary leadership, enterprise and commitment have resulted in the school achieving specialist status for communication and interaction. As a result, significant improvements have been made to the curriculum, accommodation and resources leading to better opportunities to meet pupils' needs. The leadership team is very effective in supporting all staff through excellent professional development and training, tailored to ensuring that high standards are maintained. The outcome is a staff team that is highly qualified in specialist

techniques that address the needs of pupils. Staff are ambitious and morale is high, resulting in a school with an excellent capacity to improve.

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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
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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	1
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?	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	1
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?	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	1
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	1
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

21 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillside School, Lancashire, PR3 3XB

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited your school. I was very impressed by the way in which you look after the school. I was very pleased to see how hard you are trying to improve your literacy and numeracy skills and make friends with as many people as possible. You all seem to enjoy coming to school and are making very good progress in many of the targets that the staff set for you. It is very obvious that you are becoming more confident in getting involved in new experiences and I think this is a great achievement for you all.

I quickly discovered that the staff at the school are very thorough in everything that they plan for you and are very determined that you should be successful in all the different activities you engage in. I think you go to an outstanding school because:

- the headteacher is an outstanding leader of an excellent staff
- you are making great improvements in your learning and your behaviour – and your parents are really pleased with your progress
- you are all treated as individuals.

I identified one thing that the school can do to get even better. It can look at ways of giving certificates for the work that students in Years 10 and 11 follow.

However, the most important thing is that you continue to work as hard as you do and enjoy every aspect of what the school offers.

Best wishes

John Atkinson

Lead inspector