

The Pines Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103622
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308366
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Arnalena Bee

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Philips
Headteacher	Steven Tuft
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Dreghorn Road Birmingham B36 8LL
Telephone number	01214 646136
Fax number	01214 643149

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Pines mainly educates pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). A few pupils have complex communication disorders. All pupils have statements of special educational need. As a result of these learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils are working well below national expectations. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The remaining pupils come from a number of minority ethnic groups with the largest being from Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at the early stages of learning English is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Pines is an outstanding school. All who work there have the same belief, that all of the pupils deserve the very best. Parents commented about their children 'coming on in leaps and bounds' and many parents took the trouble to write and say that they felt that the school did a very good job in educating their children. Many pupils find it hard to explain how much they enjoy their time in this calm, exciting and safe environment that is created for them. However, from the look on their smiling faces, it is obvious that pupils thoroughly enjoy the time they spend in school. They develop excellent relationships with the adults who help them and their enthusiasm to take part in the activities they are offered speaks louder than any words. Pupils are treated as individuals and the adults who work with them value everything they do. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. They gain confidence as they gradually learn about respect and the importance of getting on with each other. Attitudes to learning are very positive. The children in the Foundation Stage get off to a very good start. Links with the outside world are excellent and enhance learning. Pupils' awareness of different beliefs and cultures is enhanced very well through visiting different places of worship and listening to visitors, for example those who came in and played classical Indian music. As pupils get older, they gain an excellent idea of the reasons why they should try to follow a healthy lifestyle and take regular exercise. They enjoy physical education lessons despite the limited space in the hall and outside. Very good links with the primary school on the same site enable pupils to use its facilities as they get older.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders and managers and governors regularly check to see how well the school is doing. Everyone has very high expectations for all pupils. One parent said 'Our son has progressed beyond our expectations. We strongly believe that this is due to the hard work, dedication and teachers' understanding of autistic children.' Achievement is outstanding. The checking of pupils' progress is comprehensive. Teaching is good and often outstanding. Challenging targets that are set, especially in literacy and numeracy, are reached. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are especially well promoted in all that the pupils do. As a result, many of them confidently try speaking despite their difficulties.

The curriculum is effectively organised to meet the needs of all pupils and enable them to flourish. However, the school acknowledges that on occasions cramped accommodation limits opportunities for practical activities, including physical education. Classroom areas are small and this was an issue at the previous inspection. Pupils receive the very best care, support and guidance possible and those who look after them at home agree.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding because children receive very good teaching and support, with a very effective focus on the needs of each child. Personal and social skills are very well promoted. At all times, praise is used skilfully to show the children how well they are doing. Very good links with the community enhance learning opportunities, for example children buying the ingredients for the pizza they planned to make later in the day. The children behave very well because that is what is expected of them. Instructions are always clear and pupils are given very good opportunities to think for themselves. The care and support each child receives are exemplary. Parents are very pleased with this and say how much their children enjoy school.

One parent wrote, 'Although my child cannot tell me verbally, I know she enjoys school and has progressed very well.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve accommodation so that pupils have more space, especially when they take part in physical education and other practical activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievement all pupils make, both in their academic and personal development, is outstanding, due to the high quality of the teaching and the support they receive. Targets are challenging and progress is very carefully tracked to make sure that pupils reach the levels expected of them. Pupils make excellent progress in becoming more responsive and in developing their communication skills, especially the ability to talk during discussions in the classroom. The excellent progress of higher attaining pupils is due in part to the very good opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream primary schools. Boys and girls do equally well. Pupils who use English as an additional language similarly do as well as their classmates, due to the individual support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils, despite their difficulties, get on very well with each other and with the adults who help them. Behaviour is excellent during lessons and when they play outside during breaks. The school has a history of good attendance because pupils of all ages enjoy all that the school has to offer. Pupils speak excitedly and very knowledgeably about different fruits and vegetables that are good for you and that exercise 'makes the heart pump blood around the body fast'. They know they are safe in school and develop a good awareness of the need to be careful when they are on busy roads and when they go swimming. Their contribution to the community is outstanding. Pupils take responsibility sensibly and very seriously. One boy who was a 'Playground Pal' for the day said, 'I saw someone sitting alone and thought he was lonely so found him a friend.' The work of the school council is excellent and many changes have been instigated by it in and around the school. The more articulate pupils spoke proudly of raising money for different charities. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they have achieved very well academically and developed an excellent range of personal and social skills. They are very well prepared for their next school and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Parents are very pleased with the excellent quality of teaching and learning that goes on in this school and inspection evidence agrees with them. Teaching is underpinned by very careful attention to the needs of each pupil. Assessment information is used very well to inform planning. There is a very strong focus on individual targets for pupils that provide a high level of challenge and on ensuring that they are met. Teachers routinely ask searching questions to challenge pupils. Teaching assistants give high quality support and contribute significantly to the very good learning that goes on in lessons. All pupils' contributions are valued and speaking

and listening skills are constantly focused on. As one parent said, 'It is amazing to see that after little more than a year in the school our little 'non-verbal' child is now ordering us about at home.' A very good example of pupils being encouraged to speak was seen in Year 1 when the teacher allowed pupils to talk over a microphone. This was done skilfully and the other children responded very positively with very good sitting and listening.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. A very good selection of educational visits and interesting visitors enrich and promote pupils' personal and social skills. Pupils speak excitedly about the visit where they 'sleep away from home'. Provision for literacy and numeracy is very good, in particular it focuses on ensuring that pupils practice articulating their thinking and speaking skills. Activities are very effectively tailored to suit the needs and abilities of all pupils enabling them to make the good achievements that they do. Since the previous inspection, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved well and is now good. The previous inspection reported that classrooms were cramped. This is still the case and, on occasions, this, together with the limited space in the hall and outside, limits opportunities for pupils to undertake practical activities, including physical education. Despite this, the school does its very best with what it has. Discussions are taking place with the local authority but at present, there is no definite solution to solving accommodation issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

One of the key factors as to why this school is so successful is the high quality care, guidance and support that is provided for its pupils. The school meets requirements for safeguarding pupils. Parents comment that their children are very well cared for and inspectors agree. Academic and personal guidance and support are excellent. Very good links have been developed with many outside agencies to support pupils' specific needs. Links with parents are very good. Parents think the home-school books are useful documents that keep them in touch with school. In everything they do, pupils are very well supported whether it is in The Pines or when they are integrated into mainstream primary schools. Pupils are given extremely good verbal feedback from adults. Guidance through marking is very effective and pupils say they like receiving the stickers that teachers give them. Pupils' books show that teachers go to a lot of trouble to stick in photographic evidence, which reminds the pupils what they have been doing as well as showing what the next step in learning is.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, along with staff and governors, works tirelessly to make sure that each pupil receives and achieves the very best. Leadership has been very effective in achieving a very strong whole-school focus on pupils' individual needs. Consequently, pupils' academic and personal progress is outstanding. There is a shared and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that could be developed further. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are thorough. For example, the subject leaders collect detailed information from monitoring activities and use this to inform their subject action plans. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of achievement and the quality of teaching in their subjects.

Governors in turn check how well subject areas are developing. They are very well informed and involved in the work of the school. Consequently, they support and challenge the school extremely well. The excellent outcomes for pupils demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

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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?	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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	1

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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

6 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Pines Special School, Birmingham, B36 8LL

I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school when we came to visit you recently. We were very pleased to see how much you enjoy coming to school. We think you all work hard in lessons and the people who look after you at home will be pleased to hear about that. We really liked talking to you about what you have learnt. You are all lucky to go to such an excellent school.

These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You make outstanding progress in your subjects and personally.
- The teaching you receive is outstanding.
- The way you are looked after in school is excellent.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are all very kind towards each other.
- The way the headteacher and his staff lead and manage the school is excellent and your parents agree.
- The adults plan exciting visits, which we know you enjoy, and invite lots of interesting visitors to come in and talk to you. These make learning even more fun.

We have asked the school to do one thing to make it even better.

- Keep thinking of ways in which they can improve the accommodation to give you better opportunities for practical activities including PE.

Keep working hard and having fun as you learn.

Best wishes

Nina Bee Lead inspector

6 June 2008



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Lead inspector