

Jane Lane School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104271
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	308557
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Megee

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	109
6th form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Heather Lomas
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	Churchill Road Bentley Walsall WS2 0JH
Telephone number	01922 721161
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Age group	4–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Jane Lane School provides education for pupils with moderate learning difficulties from across the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall. Nearly half the pupils have additional complex difficulties such as autism. In 2007, the school was awarded specialist status in the category of special educational needs: cognition and learning. At the end of Year 11, many pupils leave the school to attend local colleges full time. The school's sixth form provides continuing education for pupils in Year 12 who wish to stay on and also takes in pupils from Wolverhampton schools who have chosen to stay on at school, but for whom there is no sixth form provision in their home authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Jane Lane School is a happy and effective school which brings about pupils' good academic achievement and outstanding personal development. Or, as one parent put it, 'This is one hell of a good school!' Children in the Foundation Stage get off to an excellent start because provision there is wonderful. Strong, effective and determined leadership and management are at the core of the school's success. The headteacher very clearly sets out her vision, and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses gained through insightful analysis. The school's good capacity to improve is exemplified by the way it has sought and obtained specialist status in order to provide an even more varied curriculum and extend its partnerships with local schools and colleges for the benefit of its pupils. The senior management team provides good support to the headteacher.

The good quality of the teaching and the exciting curriculum are key elements in bringing about good achievement. Although standards are exceptionally low compared with national averages, children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress as they move up through the school. Achievement is good in the sixth form because of good teaching and a good range of activities. Classroom staff have very good relationships with pupils and lessons are characterised by good-natured banter and evident enjoyment. Displays all around the school celebrate pupils' good work and achievement. Teachers plan lessons in some detail although they do not always achieve an accurate match between the activities and resources they provide and the differing needs of the pupils within the class. Consequently, some pupils have to rely too much on a staff member for support and this holds back achievement. Pupils are provided with a host of stimulating activities, including good college links in Years 10 and 11. However, currently, there are limited opportunities for other pupils to learn in mainstream environments.

Pastoral care is of such high quality that pupils make excellent gains in their personal development. The school works closely in partnership with its parents, and values their views a great deal. There is mutual trust and confidence. As one parent put it, 'The headteacher and her staff have a very unique blend of character, expertise and a down-to-earth approach. It works.' Pupils greatly enjoy all the good things the school has to offer, attend well and behave in an exemplary manner. Pupils are very kind and considerate to one another. While personal support is very strong, academic guidance is not quite so well developed. Teachers do not always make consistently effective use of short-term individual targets, for example as a focus for regular discussions with pupils about their next steps in learning. This slows down the speed at which they reach their targets.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is accommodated in cramped, shabby and out-of-date temporary mobile classrooms. Despite the unappealing environment, students in the sixth form achieve well in a good range of accredited programmes because of good teaching and effective leadership and management. The curriculum provides a good mixture of activities aimed to develop independence in life skills as well as to enable students to develop their academic skills, knowledge and understanding further. Local colleges are currently experiencing some short-term difficulties in providing sufficient places for students from the school on link programmes. The school has well advanced plans to compensate for this and to significantly widen the work-related element of its sixth form programme by building a new vocational centre, as part of its remit

as a specialist school. The sixth form does well in the steps it takes to make students who are new to the school feel welcome. One parent wrote, 'We were worried when our child moved here from a very good school. Now we wish she could stay here forever. Her self-esteem and confidence have risen beyond measure.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage make a spectacular start to their education, spurred on by the infectious enthusiasm of the staff. The school works hand in hand with parents from day one in order to gain a clear understanding of the needs and skills of each child. Parents are deeply satisfied with what their children receive. As one said, 'A wonderful school – we certainly made the right choice.' Staff are experts in adapting and customising the curriculum for the children and provide a wide range of enjoyable, purposeful activities with excellent assessment procedures so that learning is fun. Children receive constant encouragement to try their best from staff who have a deep understanding of what is required and who are committed to seeing the children improve as quickly as possible. Consequently, the children begin to make very rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well in all the areas of learning. The very strong leadership of the lead teacher ensures that the provision continues to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson activities and resources are always precisely matched to the needs and capabilities of every pupil.
- Ensure that all pupils have a complete understanding of the next steps they need to take in learning, particularly through the use of short-term individual targets.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, all pupils have opportunities for learning in a mainstream school or college.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils achieve well because of the effective teaching throughout the school. The school's analysis correctly shows no discernible difference in achievement between the different groups of pupils, apart from in the Foundation Stage where achievement is outstanding because staff have a very good understanding of what suits the children best. Pupils gain good results in Years 10 and 11 in their accredited programmes, and sixth form students achieve well in programmes related to the world of work. Achievement is strongest in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) where staff have strong subject knowledge and use a good range of teaching strategies. Achievement against individual objectives is not quite as strong, because the setting, discussing and reviewing of individual targets are not carried out regularly enough. Achievement can also be held back in some lessons where teachers do not ensure that resources such as worksheets are suitably matched to pupils' literacy levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school gives the pupils very strong personal support so that they make very rapid gains in their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This results in an environment where interactions between everybody are good-natured and joyful. It is little wonder that the pupils love coming to school. Their enjoyment is reflected in good and continually improving attendance figures, and behaviour which is consistently polite, courteous and mature. As one parent wrote, 'My son has never been as happy, motivated and comfortable to attend school as he is at Jane Lane.' Pupils behave safely even in workshop and laboratory situations, where they are mindful of health and safety regulations and put on goggles without having to be told. Pupils enthusiastically take up the numerous opportunities provided by the school for making healthy choices in their lives, such as the sports and dance clubs, or choosing a fresh salad over chips. They talk freely about the dangers of cigarettes and drugs. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their local community as exemplified by their frequent appearances around Walsall to give musical performances or to represent the school on the local authority's anti-bullying panel. The pupils, including students in the sixth form, are well prepared for the next stage of their lives through the way they develop their basic skills and great teamwork. However, the school has correctly identified that it currently offers limited opportunities for pupils to learn in mainstream schools or colleges. The school has well advanced plans for this to be rectified in September as part of its remit as a specialist school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers and classroom staff provide lessons full of engaging activities and as a result pupils learn quickly. Staff and pupils' relationships are gentle and affectionate, and lessons are often coloured by good-humoured chitchat. Most teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven the lessons and to demonstrate teaching points visually and clearly. Staff are rarely called upon to remind pupils about their behaviour, and where this is done, it is done discreetly and calmly. Staff assess pupils' performance frequently and most staff usually incorporate this information into their planning. Parents generally delight in the challenge which the teaching offers. As one parent said, 'The teachers seem to recognise and bring out the best in our son and are unafraid to challenge him and us to aim for greater achievement, personal growth and independence.' Occasionally, however, teachers do not get it quite right and activities or the resources used are not at the right level for all the pupils, so that some find it difficult to work independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's good curriculum is enriched well by a very good range of lunchtime clubs, educational visits and sporting events. The school makes effective use of its external links to

further widen pupils' experiences. The pupils regularly visit Birmingham City Football Club to receive expert coaching. A neighbourhood youth club operates on the site, and many pupils attend. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 enjoy attending Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses in the local further education college, where they gain good results, although opportunities for pupils to learn in mainstream schools or colleges are currently in short supply. The school has developed a strong partnership with two other special schools with which pupils participate in joint artistic and sporting activities. The school provides sixth form students with a good, distinctive programme of academic and vocational study which recognises their needs and aspirations as young adults.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff at the school provide very good personal support to the pupils and this enables them to feel safe and develop confidence. As one pupil said, 'There's always someone there to help you. Perhaps just a chat to get things off your chest.' Very good links have been developed with many outside agencies, such as Connexions or the speech therapy service, to support pupils' specific needs. The school has given staff good specialist training so that they know how best to manage and support vulnerable or anxious pupils, particularly those with autism. The school has put in place a specialist staff team which very effectively supports pupils who are experiencing behavioural difficulties. Parents talk about the really strong partnership they have with the school, especially the way in which they are kept in touch with their children's ups and downs, whether through home-school books or the school's parent support adviser. One parent wrote, 'We feel as parents that our views are important and we have many opportunities to share learning, coping and management strategies with all staff that care for our son.' The staff give the pupils good verbal encouragement and feedback on how well they are doing, although marking does not always contain sufficient guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils do not always have a clear idea of what they need to do in the short term to reach their individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Parents have great confidence in the headteacher's ability to make the best use of any resources available if they are to the benefit of the pupils. As one parent said, 'The headteacher is very tuned in. She has a really good rapport with parents, she breeds confidence and optimism, and she'll always give you a job to do. She's very good at delegating.' The headteacher delegates leadership well to her senior leadership team; working to individual strengths and together they provide effective direction for improving the school. There are good systems already in place for assessing and analysing pupils' performance which enable challenging whole-school targets to be set, and the school plans to introduce further improvements to these systems over the next year. This continuing quest for self-improvement has secured the outstanding personal development and good progress made by pupils. The school is well prepared for the next stage of its development following its recent success in its bid to become a specialist school. Self-evaluation is good and leaders at all levels, including governors, understand the

school's strengths and weaknesses well. The leadership team has yet to tackle inconsistencies in the use of individual targets and differentiation.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
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.

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

3 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Jane Lane School, Walsall, WS2 0JH

You may remember that inspectors came to your school recently to see how well you all doing. Thank you very much for welcoming us, and a special thanks to those pupils who met with us to tell us all about your school.

This is what we found out.

- You make good progress in your work – well done!
- You behave superbly and you are kind and considerate to each other and to the staff.
- You like your teachers very much and they do a good job of helping you learn quickly.
- You have interesting things to do in your lessons, as well as at lunchtimes.
- The staff are caring and look after you well.
- Your headteacher is a good leader in the school.

Do you notice that this is what you told us we would find?

To make the school even better we have asked those in charge to do two things.

- Make sure that all of you get exactly the right level of things to do in lessons.
- Make sure that you all know exactly what next steps you need to take to make even better progress.

Perhaps you could help by trying to do your best to remember what your targets are.

Please thank your mums, dads and carers for filling in the forms, and for coming to see me. They were a great help.

All the very best for the future

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee Lead inspector