

Samuel Laycock School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106280
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309082
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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	11–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dave Fagan
Headteacher	Mr David McIlroy
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2005
School address	Mereside Stalybridge Cheshire SK15 1JF
Telephone number	0161 3031321
Fax number	0161 3384638

Age group	11-17
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. A third of the pupils have additional special educational needs such as hearing impairment or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There are twice as many boys as girls on roll. Although pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, almost half are eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with a small minority from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Four pupils are looked after by the Local Authority. The school holds a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Award, the Sportsmark Award, the ACE Award from Connexions, the ECO Schools Silver Award and the Investors in People Award. The school is a Centre of Excellence for the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA). As part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, the school is due to move to purpose built premises on the same site as the new Ashton Academy in 2010.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress. Because of the learning difficulties and/or disabilities of the pupils, their attainments are low in comparison to those found in mainstream schools. However, their achievement is exceptional. The accredited results attained by pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are impressive and improving each year. This is because teaching is excellent and pupils are extremely motivated by the high quality and wide variety of subjects and activities offered by the school. This includes an excellent range of after-school clubs which are very popular and well attended. Work set in lessons is very well matched to the needs of individuals. Procedures to assess pupils and track their progress are very strong. There is a very well organised and comprehensive system of additional support for those pupils who need it. This means that all groups of pupils make the same excellent progress. Pupils are very well cared for and so they feel safe and able to fully participate in all activities. Academic guidance is good because there is a clear focus on involving the pupils in evaluating how well they are doing. However, although teachers' marking celebrates pupils' efforts well, it does not always show them clearly enough what they need to do to make their work even better.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. They try very hard in lessons and behave well in the dining room and school yard. Pupils respond very well to the excellent arrangements to develop their independence and social skills. They are confident and proud of their many achievements. By the time they leave the school, pupils are mature young adults who are very well prepared to make a successful transition to the work place or college. A variety of exciting sporting opportunities, and a strong programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, enable pupils to make exceptional progress in adopting safe and healthy lifestyles. There is an active school council and plenty of good opportunities to take on responsibilities. Pupils are very well involved in the planning for the new school. As a result of these activities, pupils make an outstanding contribution both to the school and the wider community. Parents are very pleased with the high quality of education their children receive. 'School staff do seem to go the extra mile for the children in every department,' is a view that typifies that of many parents.

Since he was appointed two years ago, the headteacher has been highly successful in promoting the school's aim 'to ensure that every child is happy, feels safe and enjoys success which is recognized and celebrated.' He has a very clear vision and high aspirations for the school. Leadership and management are outstanding. All aspects of the school's performance are carefully monitored and the school sets itself challenging targets in order to develop further. Although some of the governors are recently appointed, there is a good range of experience within the governing body. Consequently, governors support and challenge the school well. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, for example in the introduction of excellent provision for lower-attaining pupils ensures they make similar progress to other groups. The exemplary contribution the school is making to the Building Schools for the Future programme exemplifies that it has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking of pupils' work always shows them exactly what to do to make their work better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are below those found nationally because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the school's very good tracking systems demonstrate clearly that pupils make excellent progress against the challenging targets set in their individual education plans. They achieve extremely well compared with similar pupils across the country. Boys and girls and pupils of different ethnicity achieve equally well because work set is carefully matched to their individual needs. National test and assessment results at the end of Year 9 and accredited results achieved by Year 11 pupils have risen strongly over the past two years. In 2007 most pupils achieved entry level passes at the higher grades in English, mathematics, science, physical education, personal and social development, and child development. All Year 11 pupils achieved the Bronze Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) with more than half also gaining the Silver Award. A few pupils also gained GCSE passes in English and mathematics at grades E to G. Some pupils also gained vocational qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Attitudes in lessons are very good. Pupils always try their best, participate enthusiastically in class discussions and take care with the presentation of their work. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good. They are respectful to staff and very supportive of one another. This is evident in their keenness to participate in the various 'buddy' systems which are in place to support younger pupils. The school council is active and effective. Pupils have a real voice in moving the school forward. They enjoy coming to school very much. They are well motivated by the strong procedures which are in place to reward and celebrate good attendance and so they attend well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with pupils making particularly strong progress in social and moral development. The school is very aware of the need to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society. Consequently, pupils study world faiths in religious education and explore different cultures through art and music. This promotes their multicultural understanding well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and have an expert understanding of individuals' particular needs. Relationships are excellent. Strong team work and very well targeted one-to-one support ensures that all pupils, including those with more complex needs, are fully included in lessons and learn very well. The quality of the specialist small-group support is exemplary. This enables pupils with additional learning needs to make excellent progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are highly committed to developing their subject areas. Assessment is good and used well to plan work which, as a result, is well matched to pupils' individual needs. The intention of lessons is always shared with pupils at the start and this means that they are very clear about what they have to achieve. Teachers ensure that pupils know what their targets are and involve them in assessing their own progress. However, although marking always praises pupils for their efforts, some marking does not always pinpoint exactly what they need to do to improve their work further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. There is a very good balance between teaching key skills such as literacy, training for independence and gaining accreditation. The special needs coordinator (SENCO) is extremely effective in ensuring that the curriculum is very well adapted to address the particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities of individual pupils. A variety of excellent opportunities are in place for pupils to work outside the classroom in small groups. Provision for physical education is particularly strong. Pupils have outstanding opportunities to participate in sporting competitions, team games and matches. This promotes their confidence and social and personal development very well. The school offers an exciting variety of high quality enrichment activities, including residential trips. Excellent use is made of the local community, for example through the challenging expeditions and activities which take place in the Peak District National Park. The school makes the very best use of the limited accommodation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care and support provided for the pupils is exemplary. All procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety, including child protection procedures and risk assessments, are robust and well embedded. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Pupils say that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. They feel safe and well cared for and report that there is never any bullying. The quality of the annual review meetings and action plans is excellent with a strong focus on involving pupils and parents. Very good procedures are in place to address any learning or social needs that are identified through the reviews. This supports pupils' achievement very well. Excellent links with outside specialists, including the educational psychologist and speech and language therapist, ensure that pupils' individual needs are very well met. Pupils are involved well in setting and reviewing their learning and behavioural targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has been extremely effective in engaging all staff in a desire to aim for the best. He has created a very caring ethos where the needs of every pupil are paramount. All members of the senior management team are highly committed to driving up standards. The impact of this is evident in the improvement in the pupils' achievements since the previous inspection. Although the school was too modest when completing the self-evaluation form, the performance of all aspects of provision are monitored rigorously and the quality of evaluation is strong. The challenging targets the school sets for itself are regularly reviewed and often exceeded. The school improvement plan is comprehensive and well focused. It is a very useful tool to move the school forward. The planning for the Building Schools of the Future programme has been particularly effective in the way it has involved all stakeholders, including the pupils. Consequently, all members of the school community are very positive about the proposed move to the new school site. The headteacher is working extremely effectively with the partner school and Local Authority to move the project forward. Governors have a good variety of relevant expertise and challenge the school and other partners well.

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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 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

Inspection of Samuel Laycock School, Stalybridge, SK15 1JF

I know that some of you find reading difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about your school.

Your parents and carers think you go to an excellent school and I agree with them.

There are many things that are really outstanding in your school. These include:

- The outstanding care and support you are given so that you feel safe and make excellent progress
- the really excellent opportunities you have to do all sorts of sports
- the way the teachers listen to your views and involve you in making the school better
- the exceptionally good small-group work and excellent support in lessons, which enable you to learn really well.

All of this is possible because the headteacher, staff and the governors do a fantastic job and try their very best to make the school as good as they can for you.

I have asked your teachers to improve one thing to make your school even better. This is:

- to make sure that when they mark your work they let you know exactly what you need to do next time to make it even better.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help your teachers all you can.