

Ravenshall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107799
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	309507
Inspection dates	5–6 June 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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Russell Jackson
Headteacher	Mr C Newby
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
School address	Ravensthorpe Road Thornhill Lees Dewsbury West Yorkshire WF12 9EE
Telephone number	01924 325234
Fax number	01924 325235

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large special school changed its designation and doubled in size in January 2007 following amalgamation with another school. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties combined with other special needs such as behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. As a consequence of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are very low. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high. A high proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly Asian or Asian British - Pakistani families. For a small minority English is not the language spoken at home. The school holds Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ravenshall school is satisfactory and improving. Parents and carers report that they are pleased with the education that it provides for their children.

Despite initial difficulties the senior leadership team has been successful in managing the merger of two schools to create a new establishment which is cohesive. Challenges arising from the more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities of pupils new to the school have been effectively addressed. For example, the school has worked effectively with the local authority to implement strategies to manage behaviour. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is now good in lessons and satisfactory around the school and in the playground.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, overall. The quality of much of the care and support given to pupils is good. However, not all are given consistent guidance about what they need to do to make their work better and many do not know their individual learning targets. The school works effectively with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure the protection and welfare of all pupils including those who are most vulnerable.

Pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those at an early stage of learning English, make expected progress in lessons and their achievement is satisfactory. This is because teaching is satisfactory. There are some good lessons in which teachers and classroom staff combine effectively and make learning enjoyable and profitable for their pupils. This, however, is not consistent across the whole school and so limits pupils' progress. Not all teachers are using information gained from assessment well enough to match work set to the individual needs of different pupils so that they learn confidently and improve.

The curriculum, which is satisfactory, is developing well and includes a good variety of clubs and other activities to engage pupils. Through activities such as the life skills programme, pupils gain skills which will be useful in adult life. The opportunities for pupils to follow courses leading to certificates and qualifications have been increased. In 2007, all Year 11 leavers gained accredited awards.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend well and enjoy coming to school but there is a small minority who are absent too frequently. The school has, however, been successful in improving the attendance of some pupils with weaker attendance records. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe and healthy and they make a satisfactory contribution to the local community through fund-raising for charity. Because of their good relationships with staff and because they are motivated well by the reward system, they make sound progress in developing social skills and in distinguishing right from wrong.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been steady progress in setting up the key systems and structures which underpin an effective school but the specific roles and responsibilities of middle managers and subject leaders are not yet fully established. As a consequence, some tasks more appropriately owned by middle managers are carried out by the senior team. To some extent this limits the time available to senior managers to gain an overview of the school's performance and the quality of education it provides. The school is strongly committed to equality of opportunity and works effectively with other schools and agencies to promote the educational and social development of its pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and committed to the school, however they have more to do in developing rigorous procedures for holding the school to account. The school uses its resources efficiently and effectively and gives sound value for money. It has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of information gained from assessment to set work which is well matched to the learning levels of individual pupils.
- Improve the quality of support and guidance so that all pupils know their specific learning targets and understand how to achieve these.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of middle managers and subject leaders to enable them to carry out their duties more effectively.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There is some good progress in lessons where teachers know their pupils well and there is good teaching. However, in the minority of subjects and classes which are affected by discontinuities such as staff absence progress is more uneven. In these instances there are weaknesses in setting and sharing targets with pupils, and in using assessment to match work set to pupils' individual needs. As a consequence, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. A range of assessments made by the school provides evidence that most individual pupils make sound progress over time. In 2007, all Year 11 leavers achieved nationally recognised accreditation which was suitable for their individual learning levels. This included GCSE in art and design, entry levels in mathematics, Spanish, English, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, science and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Bronze Award.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and has improved because of the determined way in which the school has tackled weak attendance. Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably over the last year and the number of exclusions is falling. However, the school continues to address this issue vigorously. New strategies, such as the effective 'Can Do' class for disaffected pupils, are already reducing the number of incidents of problematic behaviour. Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe at school. Pupils participate in lessons enthusiastically and have good relationships with staff. They are confident to express their opinions. There is a school council, but its impact and effectiveness is presently limited. The personal development of the youngest pupils with particularly complex needs is good because there is a good emphasis on teaching them to be as independent as possible. However, in some other classes staff do too much for pupils. This means that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some of the teaching is good. Teaching assistants provide good support and are well deployed. This means that all pupils are fully included in lessons. Teachers are skilled at planning a wide variety of lively and stimulating activities to engage and motivate pupils. Resources are generally well used although little use of the interactive whiteboards in lessons was observed during the inspection. While some teachers use information gained from assessment to match work to the needs of individual pupils, in a number of lessons this good practice is not followed and all pupils do exactly the same work. This means that higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged, while lower attaining pupils struggle to complete their work. Although staff are now effective at managing behaviour in lessons, the mismatch of work to individuals' needs can result in some pupils becoming disaffected.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some strong aspects. It is developing well. The specialist 'High Needs' and 'Can Do' classes ensure that the learning needs of those pupils with more complex difficulties and/or behavioural difficulties are suitably addressed. There is a satisfactory balance between teaching key skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT and activities to promote pupils' personal development such as the life skills programme. The school offers a good range of enrichment activities, including a good variety of lunchtime clubs which are well attended and enjoyed by pupils, as well as visits and residential trips. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a good variety of accredited courses. The quality and variety of resources and the accommodation are very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety meet requirements. Pastoral care and support, including that for the most vulnerable pupils, such as those who are looked after by the local authority, is good. Annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational need are well organised and thorough. The school has satisfactory links with a range of outside agencies to support pupils' welfare. There are good systems in place to ensure that the youngest pupils settle well. Good links with local colleges ensure that pupils make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education. However, pupils are given insufficient academic guidance because the targets set for them are insufficiently precise and they are not kept fully aware of them. The process of setting targets is not used effectively to promote pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is clear about the educational direction that the school must take. Deputy headteachers share this view and support the headteacher well. However, the roles and responsibilities of leaders, including middle managers and subject leaders, are not yet sufficiently

defined. This leads to some aspects of work more appropriate for middle managers being carried out by those in more senior posts. The senior leadership team has consequently been too preoccupied with the day-to day running of the school to devote enough time to gaining a strategic overview and fully to evaluate how well the school is doing. Analysis of the school's performance is at an early stage. Data about pupils' performance is collected. However, this information is not yet collated and analysed to monitor differences in achievement among groups of pupils or to respond to any areas of underachievement. Governors are experienced, with a good range of relevant expertise. They provide a good level of support for the school but they are insufficiently proactive as critical partners in the school's development.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

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 we 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.

During the inspection I found that your school is satisfactory and getting better. You are making sound progress in your work because of the satisfactory teaching you receive. You are developing into considerate young people and most of you behave well and come to school when you should. The school takes satisfactory care of you but some of you need more guidance about how well you are succeeding and what you should do next in order to improve. The leadership and management of your school are satisfactory. There are some things that are really good about your school. These are:

- the good relationships you have with staff
- the good support which you are given so that you can all join in lessons
- the good opportunities which older pupils have to study a wide range of courses leading to qualifications
- the good range of clubs and other exciting things which you do such as working with the 'composer in residence'.

You can help to make your school better by always attending when you should and by always behaving well. I have also asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school even better. These are:

- to improve the consistency of teaching
- to ensure your teachers always set work which is at just the right level for each of you
- to make sure that you have learning targets and know what they are
- to sort out what jobs different teachers have to do.

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