

The Percy Hedley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108657
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309759
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	205
6th form	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Wignall
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Watson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001
School address	Station Road & West Lane Forest Hall Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE12 8YY
Telephone number	0191 2665491
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils of Percy Hedley consist of two main groups: those with speech and language difficulties; and those with cerebral palsy who follow a conductive education approach. The former group includes pupils with hearing impairment and with varying degrees of autism. Both groups contain children from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic groups. Pupils are drawn from 14 different local authorities across the north of England and occasionally further away. A residential unit has beds for up to 17 pupils. Currently, up to 49 pupils access this provision at some point each week. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the main language. Thirty eight pupils are looked after by local authorities. All pupils either have a statement of special educational need or are being assessed. The school operates on two main sites: one for Foundation Stage and primary age pupils; the other for secondary and post-16 pupils. It also incorporates a Sports Academy. There are 37 full and part-time therapists who work alongside teaching staff and support assistants to plan, implement and support fully integrated programmes of work.

The Percy Hedley Foundation was formed in 1953 by a small group of parents who recognised the need for special provision for children with cerebral palsy. In recognition of this, the values of parental partnership are central to the philosophy of the school.

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 outstandingly effective school in all aspects of its work and gives excellent value for money. Even alongside other outstanding schools it stands out as a beacon of excellence. Its commitment to developing and sharing outstanding practice is recognised nationally and, increasingly, internationally. Parents are virtually unanimous in their support of the school, often having fought hard to secure a place for their children. Pupils love attending and their spirit and hard work contribute enormously to the school's exceptional ethos and tremendous sense of community.

Outstanding integrated teaching, shared by education staff and highly skilled therapists, leads to pupils making excellent progress. This is equally evident in their academic achievement and their personal development. The nature of pupils' difficulties and/or disabilities means that they are unable to attain standards met by mainstream school pupils. Instead, progress is measured against challenging individual targets agreed between staff, parents and, wherever possible, the pupils themselves. Excellent behaviour contributes enormously to ensuring the school remains a safe and happy place. This is enormously reassuring to parents and comforting to pupils, who respond by attending whenever they can and being friendly to, and supportive of, one another. Learning extends well beyond the classroom. An invigorating range of additional activities enriches the outstanding curriculum and increases pupils' interests and celebration of life. Particularly worthy of mention are the hugely popular 'Summer Schools' which break up the long summer holiday and are exceptionally well received by parents and pupils.

Outstanding leadership, management and governance have led to continuing advances in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support of pupils. Issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed exceptionally well. Visionary leadership has set a clear and ambitious schedule for further improvement, fully backed by the trustees of the Percy Hedley Foundation and the passionate commitment of staff. This puts the school in an excellent and enviable position to continue improving. Recent changes in the management structure are helping to standardise provision across the whole school. The exceptionally well co-ordinated work of the many different professionals working in school is central to its success. Meticulous attention is paid to the well-being of pupils and the development of individual programmes to meet their physical and academic needs. The school's commitment to helping pupils to lead healthy lives is typified by the provision of an extensive programme of physical activities, partially facilitated through significant investment in a very high quality sports provision. The skilled work of many therapists also contributes enormously to helping pupils to stay healthy in mind as well as body. The exceptional progress pupils make in learning how to communicate and to minimise the impact of their physical difficulties significantly improves their future prospects in adult life.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Post-16 provision is outstanding. It is exceptionally well led, teaching is outstanding, the curriculum is visionary and the guidance and support pupils receive are excellent. Virtually all Year 11 pupils choose to stay on at school for a further two years. They are often joined by pupils who have left other schools. The success of the post-16 department is evident in its rapid growth and development in recent years. Preparation for adult life, through the excellent promotion of independence, is the main focus of its work. In addition to this, many pupils gain

additional qualifications and improve their grades in others. The range of accreditation increases each year. It includes GCSE and Entry Level courses in a good range of subjects. It is particularly well matched to the needs as well as the abilities of individuals. Pupils are provided with invaluable opportunities to build on their experience and understanding of career opportunities. There are excellent opportunities for them to follow, for example, courses in colleges of further education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstandingly effective. It includes many Key Stage 1 pupils whose needs can best be met in a Foundation Stage environment. Most pupils joining the school at this stage are at the very earliest stages of learning and socialising. In every area of learning and development they make exceptional progress. This is the result of the outstanding teaching of an excellent, exciting and relevant curriculum. The contributions of exceptionally skilled therapists to teaching, learning and assessment are immense. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The most recent Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) judged that boarding provision at this school provided excellent outcomes for the people who use it. This is also the finding of this inspection. Excellent leadership and management have ensured that National Minimum Standards are met and many exceeded. Where recommendations have been made for minor improvements, prompt action has been taken. The residence provides a welcoming environment in which pupils are encouraged to make sensible lifestyle choices and to grow in independence. Rich and varied opportunities to take part in after-school activities contribute enormously to pupils' enjoyment of life and the broader school curriculum. Access to the residence allows pupils who would otherwise not be able to attend the school, on account of distance from home, to benefit from everything else this outstanding school has to offer. Meticulous attention is paid to safeguarding pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no issues for the school to address in order to improve other than those identified in the school's own development plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities it is unrealistic to compare standards with mainstream schools. What is important is that in relation to targets set for each individual pupil through consultation between parents, teachers, therapists and, wherever possible, the children themselves, pupils can be seen to be making excellent progress. Every parent who responded to the inspection questionnaire was happy with the progress their child was making. Pupils frequently show excitement when they learn new things and work hard to meet their targets.

Many pupils join the Foundation Stage at the very earliest stage of learning and development, well below those typical for their age and, because of the nature of their difficulties, a few face massive obstacles to further learning. However, they are helped immensely by staff to communicate their needs and improve the quality of their lives. Others can be seen to make tremendous academic progress as their powers of communication improve alongside increasing physical control of their own bodies. This is seen in the examination results of older pupils. Last year, 13 pupils gained 23 GCSE passes between them, mostly in the range of A* to C grades. Twenty-one pupils also achieved a total of 50 passes in Entry Level examinations. Data provided by the school show that progress is broadly uniform throughout the school and for all groups of pupils, including those being looked after by a local authority. Inspection evidence supports this finding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. The wonderful ethos of the school is defined by pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Communal moments are harmonious, especially in the secondary common room where pupils mix freely and happily in small social groups, playing games and enjoying social banter. Behaviour is excellent, there has never been cause to exclude a pupil and lessons are very rarely interrupted, allowing all pupils to concentrate and work hard. The consideration that pupils show for one another ensures that the school stays a safe and happy place. Pupils take good advice about how to keep out of trouble and stay healthy in mind and body. Sporting activities have grown in number and quality since the building of the excellent new sports complex which has opened up many opportunities for pupils to play more competitive games and meet pupils from other schools. Many parents report that their children wish the school could be open all the year round such is their enjoyment of school. Communal spirit is excellent. Pupils know that their views are listened to and that sensible suggestions for improvement will be acted upon. Many charities are supported through pupils' fund raising efforts and pupils have successfully campaigned to improve the locality, for instance, by making access to public places and transport easier for people with disabilities. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' independence skills and their ability to communicate plays a hugely important and effective part in promoting their life chances on leaving school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Responsibilities for teaching are shared by staff teams incorporating teachers, classroom assistants and therapists. Deployment of these teams is excellent and efficient, helped enormously by the enhanced skills and confidence of the individuals involved. This joint work ensures that the pupils' physical and learning needs are exceptionally well met, allowing them to thrive and make excellent progress. Thorough, accurate assessment of needs and progress allows staff to plan lessons meticulously, with every individual participating in tasks which they find challenging yet enjoyable. Skilled use is made of special equipment to help pupils communicate and participate fully in lessons. Extensive monitoring

of teaching by senior staff showed that earlier this year teaching was slightly stronger in the primary department than it was in the secondary department. The prompt and astute actions of managers have successfully bridged this gap. Inspectors noted no differences, with many instances of outstanding teaching and learning on both sites and none less than good. Staff take great care to check what pupils have learned in each lesson and remembered from previous ones. They ensure that pupils are involved in the process. Exceptionally strong links with parents ensure they are kept well informed about their children's progress and how they can contribute to their further learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is exceptionally well enriched and extended through a wide range of exciting and enjoyable activities, including educational visits, a wide range of visitors, weekend sports activities, after-school activities in the residence and the exceptionally well received summer schools which punctuate the long holiday. All requirements are met. A small number of pupils, those with the most severe speech and language difficulties, are exempted from learning a modern foreign language. Staff make sure that all pupils are equally able to access learning opportunities, often with the help of additional or augmentative communication aids. Communication and independent learning are strongly promoted in all lessons and at other times during the school day. Numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology feature strongly in the timetable, as does personal, health and social education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. Pupils are well protected. Meticulous attention is paid to the recruitment of suitable staff and all staff receive annual training in safeguarding children. Potential risk in activities and situations is carefully assessed to minimise unforeseen accidents. Health and safety is accorded the highest priority. Excellent communication with parents ensures that they are fully involved in their children's education and reviews of progress. A family support worker effectively liaises with therapists and teachers. This adds to the high quality of frequent home visits to help parents contribute to the education of their children. This includes the free service, 'School for Parents', offered to the parents of pre-school children who have cerebral palsy. The contributions of a huge range of professionals, including teachers, therapists and psychologists, are very carefully and effectively coordinated to ensure that they complement each other. Assessment procedures are excellent and far-reaching. The information gained from regular and accurate reviews of pupils' progress is put to excellent use in planning future programmes and ensuring that each pupil is supported appropriately and able to benefit from everything the school has to offer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The exceptional headteacher and her leadership team ensure that an extremely complex organisation runs smoothly and effectively. There are no unnecessary complications, therefore allowing staff to concentrate fully on pupils' learning and well-being. Significant changes to the management structure at the beginning of the current school year have helped to bring more consistency between the two sites, with responsibilities being carried across the whole school. Exceptionally focused and accurate self-evaluation provides managers with very useful information. This is used extremely well to eliminate barriers to learning and to build upon the school's many strengths. This enables the school to meet its challenging targets and improve pupils' lives. Governors and trustees are highly effective and ensure that the high ideals of the Percy Hedley Foundation are reflected in provision to benefit pupils' and their families' lives. Perceptive and frequent monitoring of teaching and the curriculum, and taking prompt action to improve minor weaknesses, help to bring about constant and gradual improvement. Excellent attention is paid to staff development. The budget for this is huge but it ensures that staff remain at the forefront of expertise in provision for children with cerebral palsy or with extreme speech, language and communication problems. The school has an exceptionally good national reputation and a growing international one, as a result of its extensive training programmes.

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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1	1
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	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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

10 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Percy Hedley School, North Tyneside

What a joy it was to visit your wonderful school the other day. ‘Memorable’ is the best way I can describe it, and for all the right reasons. Thank you for contributing to the uplifting experience.

It is my job to visit schools such as yours to see how things are going. I can confidently say, in your case, that things are going outstandingly well. My conversations with a few of you suggested that you already knew this.

Schools as excellent as yours are rare. ‘Outstanding in all aspects of its work’ is what I wrote in my report and I meant it. That means you are getting an exceptionally good deal. Teaching, the curriculum, your care and the leadership and management of the school are all excellent. As a result, you are making wonderful progress and being prepared exceptionally well for when you leave.

I am meant to give you a list of improvements needed to make your school even better. I cannot make a list because there is so little that has not already been dealt with. Instead, I have suggested that the school shares with other schools the secrets of its success. You are a big part of that.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)