

Fox Wood Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111496
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310606
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain

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	71
6th form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Debbie Holding
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	7 April 2003
School address	Chatfield Drive Birchwood Warrington Cheshire WA3 6QW
Telephone number	01925 851393
Fax number	01925 816795

Age group	4-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The great majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties or have autistic spectrum disorders. A significant number has profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils admitted to the school in recent years display increasingly diverse and complex learning needs. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A good number of pupils take free school meals. The school has achieved the Primary and Secondary Quality Mark, Artsmark, the National Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People award, Eco Bronze award and a recognised award for information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Representative views from parents include, 'My child loves coming to school each day and I know that she is in good hands; the staff are an inspiration to me.' The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support and as a result, nurtures pupils' personal development extremely well. Achievement is good given the severity of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils leave school with at least one external award.

Accreditation includes areas such as communication, number handling and expressive arts.

Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is outstanding in the lessons where teachers have a very good awareness of the complex needs of pupils and then closely match work to meet those needs. This is not the case yet in all classes. The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of the pupils well. The school has just established a well equipped multi-sensory room to develop the curriculum for those pupils who need to use all their senses as learning aids. Chances for inclusion in mainstream schools are very good and pupils often join in lessons such as drama and physical education. A visit to a local primary school revealed a high level of integration between pupils as they all enjoyed craft activities together. Communication was not an issue as some of the pupils from the primary school were able to sign and work effectively with Fox Wood pupils.

Thematic curriculum events such as 'enjoy and achieve'; 'healthy schools' and 'careers' weeks make a strong contribution to pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Enjoyment of school life is outstanding and reflected in excellent rates of attendance. Pupils feel safe and secure. This is because they have excellent relationships with staff and know that they can turn to them for help if they feel worried. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community because there are many opportunities for them to take responsibility and help others. With staff support, the least mobile pupils do a splendid job as register monitors and the school council enables pupils to learn about good citizenship especially well. Excellent health education and activities such as hydrotherapy and swimming have led to pupils developing outstanding attitudes towards healthy living. Good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT ensures that pupils are well prepared for the future.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works tirelessly to ensure that pupils achieve well within a strong family ethos. Provision is carefully monitored; this has identified that further multi-sensory chances are required across the curriculum to meet the widening range of pupils' needs. The school has fully addressed the issue concerning ICT raised at the last inspection. Along with improvements to care, support, guidance and personal development, this demonstrates good capacity for improvement. In view of the quality of provisions and outcomes, the school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Provision is good and the curriculum provides high levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pupils achieve well. All pupils gain external accreditations by the time they leave the sixth form, including in areas such as 'meal preparation', 'home management' and 'beliefs and values'. Personal development and behaviour are excellent. Pupils blossom into mature young citizens with a high level of self-confidence. Pupils and parents are pleased with the education provided, and the school takes account of their views in developing provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The majority of children make good progress in most areas of learning, including communication and language development. Children make excellent progress in their personal and social development. They settle in quickly because of the exceptional care they receive and soon start to enjoy learning routines. Teaching and the curriculum meet children's needs well and keep them actively engaged. Good outdoor provision supports physical development and ensures that children can play safely. Assessment procedures are strong and this ensures that children transfer effectively to the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising teachers' awareness of the more complex needs of pupils.
- Develop more multi-sensory learning opportunities across the curriculum to meet pupils' diverse needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils meet challenging targets and make good progress in relation to their capability and starting points. The vast majority of pupils make good progress and a few make very good progress. Learning is good in most subjects and courses. Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across all key stages. All pupils achieve at least one accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). This may include, 'Towards Independence', 'Transition Challenge' or 'Bronze award' and 'Silver Challenge award'. A wide range of skills are reflected in these awards, including personal hygiene, creativity, information handling and sports. In addition, many older pupils are making good progress through the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance units (AQA), including literacy, mathematics and ICT.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development is outstanding. This includes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some excellent examples of spiritual development were seen during the inspection. Pupils expressed their joy and marvelled at each other's achievements as they took part in 'rebound therapy' on a trampoline under appropriate and safe conditions. Many pupils with severe learning difficulties were spellbound as they worked with adults and took digital photographs of model figures they had made. Pupils were astonished as they later produced animation scenes by quickly flicking through the pictures. Behaviour is good and pupils show a very high level of care and concern for each other. Pupils learn to understand their feelings as they grow older and mature very well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Consequently, pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work. Teachers engage learners well and encourage them to work independently. Good pupil management ensures that pupils stay focused on their work. A high level of challenge ensures that pupils achieve their targets. Assessment is accurate. This ensures that work is well matched to pupils' needs and pupils know how to improve. Pupils are learning to evaluate their own work well especially at the end of lessons where they have the opportunity to discuss or show how much they have learned. Teaching and support assistants make a strong contribution to learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good but a small number of teachers are not quite as clear as they might be about the most complex needs of pupils. Classroom resources such as ICT are well used to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy their education and achieve well because the curriculum matches their needs well. There is effective provision to acquire basic skills. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is very effective, leading to outstanding personal development. The response of different groups of learners to the curriculum is carefully monitored. This has highlighted that more multi-sensory learning chances are required across the curriculum to meet the widening diversity of pupils' needs. Pupils have many chances to contribute to their school and keenly take on responsibilities. There are good arrangements for older pupils to gain work related experiences in areas such as retail and gardening. Also, there is a wide range of additional learning chances through lunchtime activities and after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils are treasured by staff and treated as individuals. Typical comments from parents included, 'My son thinks as much about school life as he does about home life, he knows that he's loved and cared for wherever he is.' Staff are highly committed to encouraging enjoyment and achievement. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place and reviewed regularly. Links with external agencies are excellent. For example, the school nurse and the frequent presence of therapists working in school is valued highly by pupils and parents. This ensures that medication, therapy and various clinics can take place in school, enabling continuity in learning. Pupils are well informed about their targets, achievements and how to improve their work. Any pupils at risk of underachievement are identified early and effective arrangements put in place to keep them engaged. Consequently, they achieve well as do other groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The impact of this is seen in the good progress made by the great majority of pupils, their sense of security and well-being, and in the school's good reputation locally. The leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. Managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through effective self-evaluation. Inspection judgements agree with the school's self-evaluation with the exception of care, guidance and personal development. The school adopted an over-cautious approach in judging the strengths of these areas. The governing body is very supportive. Governors hold the school to account well, for instance, in financial matters to ensure value for money. Inclusion is good. A significant number of pupils benefit positively from mainstream integration experiences in local schools. Resources are used well to improve pupils' learning opportunities. The school has recently introduced computerised teaching aids and pupils are responding the better for it. Parents are very supportive of the school. The school works particularly closely with parents and has responded in abundance to their requests for different types of information about their children's progress, about how they learn and workshops designed to improve their involvement in their children's learning.

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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	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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2	
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	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	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?	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?	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

Inspection of Fox Wood Special School, Warrington, WA3 6QW

First, I must thank you for all the help you gave me in the inspection of your school. I was delighted that so many of you wanted to talk to me and tell me about your school.

Your school is good. You are happy and you make good progress. I know that your parents or carers are 'over the moon' because you achieve well. Your curriculum is good. The school provides outstanding care, support and guidance for you. I enjoyed talking with your school council and I was very impressed at how many excellent suggestions you have made to improve the school. You all have very good attitudes towards learning. Most pupils behave well and many behave especially well. Attendance is excellent because you enjoy school life so much. Your attitudes towards healthy living are outstanding. Pupils with responsibilities do fantastic jobs. The register monitors do a first-rate job. I know that you are all concerned about the community you live in and you all make a great contribution to the community. Your personal development is excellent. I was pleased to see that teaching is good and all adults help you to learn well. I can see that the school is preparing you well for the future. I know that you will carry on working hard and making the most of all your good learning chances.

Leadership and management of your school are good. Your school is in safe hands. The school's leaders do a good job in developing chances for many of you to join lessons in other local schools. The full report about the school says all the things in this letter. I know that you will carry on doing your best and achieving wonderful things.

Although all aspects of your school are good and some things are excellent, the school can:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising teachers' awareness of the more complicated needs of pupils
- develop more chances in the curriculum for different pupils to use all their senses to learn.