

# Chesnut Lodge Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111514
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	310612
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Hunt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sue Tipton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Lancaster
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Green Lane Ditton Widnes Cheshire WA8 7HF
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4240679
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4952141

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<b>Age group</b>	2–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Chesnut Lodge is a special school for children with complex needs arising from their physical and medical difficulties. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the numbers of children coming to the school with more severe and profound difficulties. Pupils can be admitted at any stage in their school life though most start in the Nursery, with some attending on a part-time basis from mainstream schools. Pupils' skills on entry to the school are below the level expected for their chronological age. Not all pupils have a statement of special education need when they start: some may be admitted on an assessment basis.

The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There is a higher than average number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Status, Sportsmark, Activemark, Gold Tasty Tuck Award and Artsmark Gold. The school is a Full Service Extended School and a Specialist SEN College (physical and sensory needs). It is part of Ditton Children's Centre and provides an outreach service supporting in mainstream schools. Consequently, pupils have good access to mainstream education either on a temporary or permanent basis.

At the time of the inspection there were no Year 6 pupils in the school.

## 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 that has made good improvements since its last inspection and gives good value for money. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead and manage the school well and with a very clear sense of purpose. They have long since established a positive ethos and an attractive and secure learning environment. Their enthusiasm and vision for the future inspire confidence and ambition among staff, pupils and parents. Governance is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. However, their role in holding the school to account for its performance is not fully developed.

Achievement is good. Pupils in all key stages make good progress in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, science, and personal and social development because of the consistently good standard of teaching and learning. Teachers' planning is thorough and, in the main, makes sure that the learning needs of pupils are met. However, on some occasions in lessons there is not enough challenge for the more able pupils. Staff assess pupils' progress on a regular basis and provide very good support in lessons. This leads to good levels of participation as well as high levels of motivation.

Pupils benefit from a good curriculum. They have access to entry level courses in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, childcare and ASDAN (Towards Independence). In addition they can take mathematics GCSE in school and English at a local high school. Lessons are interesting because of the good use of resources that make learning exciting and relevant.

The school has established outstanding links with other schools and agencies to promote very effectively the pupils' personal development and well-being. Such links with the local authority have resulted in the strong development of the school where inclusion for all is paramount. The school's highly regarded outreach service enables others to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of the school.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is equally so. Pupils develop into very mature and considerate young citizens. This is because the care and guidance pupils receive is outstanding. However, the sensory curriculum for older pupils has not been fully reviewed to take in to account the increasing number who join the school with more complex needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their enthusiasm in lessons. They adopt healthy lifestyles particularly well through the Healthy Schools initiative and there is a high level of participation in activities such as swimming and football. Pupils feel safe and say that there is no bullying. Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding, particularly with their very active fund-raising for local and international charities such as the Bangladesh Cyclone Appeal and a holiday fund for disabled children. The school council's input is excellent and their observations about healthy eating options in school have led to positive changes in practice.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Through good leadership and management the provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enjoy a good start to their education and progress well in all areas of learning. They receive a high level of personal attention, support and guidance. Their needs are quickly assessed and structured activities and routines are planned to meet their individual needs. At present, there is no provision for outdoor learning and play. However, the indoor provision is adapted

to meet their specific physical and personal needs. The integration of mainstream children learning and playing alongside their special needs peers enhances further this already strong provision. Teaching and learning are good. Communication and social and emotional skills are taught well and enable children to achieve well. Children's physical needs are also managed with great skill. The good curriculum is planned well to meet the children's needs. Staff accurately assess children's progress. They use this information effectively to plan the next small steps of each child's development.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend the sensory curriculum to meet the changing needs of individual pupils and ensure that the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Ensure that the governing body plays a more active role in holding the school to account for its performance.
- Improve the provision for Foundation Stage children to include an outside learning environment.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and pupils make good progress from their starting points. In the Foundation Stage, children have a good start and make particularly rapid progress in their communication, personal and movement skills. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 achieve very well in music, dance and art. Considerable progress has been made in pupils' achievements in ICT since the last inspection. Pupils also develop their skills well in using the computer and keyboard in other subjects. This was very evident in the work the older pupils did with their 'podcast project', where they produced extremely professional presentations on screen with superb sound effects. All Key Stage 4 pupils gain accreditation in school and some also by attending a local high school or college.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' superb personal development makes an excellent contribution to learning. Parents confirm that their children blossom during their time at the school. Attendance is good considering the medical problems a large majority of pupils suffer from. The school does its best to ensure that children are encouraged to attend school whenever possible. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils display trust and respect for adults as well as great care and consideration for one another. They learn how to stay healthy and safe and take part in physical activities with real enthusiasm. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, they collect for a large number of charities and are involved in the community, both locally and internationally. The school council is well established and have made some considerable differences within the school, such as developing a sensory garden and ensuring healthy options at lunch-time. Pupils' awareness of life beyond school is enriched through a wide range of educational visits. Well planned work-related learning helps them to develop life skills and to grow in maturity, preparing them well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and their skilled support staff work effectively together to help pupils' learn well. High quality relationships and social harmony are evident throughout the school and underpin the pupils' very positive approach to their learning. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils. They make good use of marking and assessment of pupils' learning to ensure most activities are suitably challenging. However, the higher attaining pupils working within small groups are not always sufficiently challenged. Most teachers use praise very effectively to stimulate and motivate pupils to give their best. This was very evident during an outstanding science lesson when Year 5 pupils were encouraged to talk about micro-organisms and the need for food to be handled and stored with care.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. Personal, social and health education is a key element of the curriculum and helps pupils to live healthy and safe lives and be included in as wide a range of activities as possible. There is a wealth of opportunities in which pupils can participate. For example, dance, residential trips, ICT and activities taught by visiting specialists. The good opportunities for work experience are influential in motivating older pupils. They widen their horizons and raise their aspirations about what they can do when they leave school. Children in the Nursery benefit enormously by having mainstream peers playing and learning alongside them. The school adjusted its Foundation Stage provision to cater for children's more complex needs and are developing their sensory curriculum well. This has yet to happen further up the school. Over the past two years the school has embraced the extended school provision and there are many extra-curricular and enrichment activities available from Reception to Year 11.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All staff ensure that pupils learn and grow in a safe and supportive environment. Appropriate statutory arrangements are in place for protecting and safeguarding pupils. Risk assessments are well established in school practice. The school works in close collaboration with education, health and other outside agencies to meet pupils' specific needs. The partnership between parents and the school is very strong. Parents are kept fully involved in decisions about their children's education, target setting and personal development. Very effective use is made of home/school books and diaries to keep parents informed and involved. Parents are very vocal in their support for the school and appreciate what the staff do for their children. Typically, parents say they consider it a privilege to be part of Chesnut Lodge. Exemplary transition procedures ensure that pupils and parents are quickly settled into the routines of school life. The assessment of pupils' work and tracking of their progress is developing very well. Pupils know their targets and what they have to do to achieve them. This makes a major contribution to the quality of academic guidance and support the pupils receive. The monitoring of pupils who transfer to full-time mainstream education is developing well. The inclusion of pupils during their time in mainstream schools either part-time or full-time is outstanding.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher and her leadership team set a clear direction and are focused on improvement. Since the last inspection the subject leaders have become more in tune with improving their subject areas. Regular monitoring takes place and they provide effective support for staff within school. Subject leaders are beginning to check that all aspects of the curriculum are covered and pupils' progress in their subjects. The setting of realistic and challenging targets in this process is a strength. Governors have become more of a critical friend to the school and have restructured their sub committees well. However, they do not yet hold the school fully to account. The school is fully inclusive and through its extended provision has formed very strong links with local mainstream schools and other partners. It is highly regarded by the local community. The morale amongst the staff is high and new staff are very well supported and developed. There is a clear understanding by the headteacher and her leadership team as to the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, actions taken to improve the school are well chosen and planned to ensure the best outcomes for the pupils. This reflects the school's strong capacity to improve and why it provides good value for money.

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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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### 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	1
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	1
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

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

Inspection of Chesnut Lodge Special School, Widnes, WA8 7HF

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I thought you were all very friendly and polite. I was very impressed with how mature and sensible you all were and how well you all got on as friends and helped each other. Your behaviour is excellent and I can see you enjoy the many exciting opportunities and activities that the school provides. I agree with you that you go to a good school because:

- you all work very hard and get more and more independent as you get older
- the headteacher and her staff run the school well
- you have lots of opportunities to work in local mainstream schools with other pupils.

To help your school become even better I have asked the headteacher to:

- make sure you are all challenged with your work and that it meets your particular needs
- involve governors more in checking how well the school is doing
- develop an outdoor classroom for the Foundation Stage children so that they can enjoy learning outdoors.