

Longspee School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113963
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	311431
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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	5-14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan Sullivan
Headteacher	Sean Pavitt
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Learoyd Road Canford Heath Poole BH17 8PJ
Telephone number	01202 380266
Fax number	01202 380270

Age group	5-14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) for the Borough of Poole and takes a few pupils from the neighbouring authorities of Hampshire and Dorset. The vast majority of pupils are boys. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and their attainment on entry is well below levels expected. Almost all the pupils are White British. The school provides support for many of the mainstream schools in the Borough, in helping them deal with pupils they find difficult. The school has two sites. Most of the pupils are taught on the main site. Only those in Year 3 are taught at the small satellite site about two miles away. Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone a period of considerable change. In September 2005, it admitted pupils in Years 7 to 9 for the first time, there was a small expansion programme, and staff turnover has been very high. The current headteacher started in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The effectiveness of the school is inadequate. In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act (2005), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Over the last few years, Longspee School has endured a difficult time. This can be seen in the inadequate progress pupils make in their learning as well as in their development as young people. Because of their difficulties with learning, the standards they attain are well below average. Too many of the older pupils do not enjoy school and this shows in their poor attitudes to school and to their learning, their poor behaviour, and in their poor attendance. Too often, the school is not a calm and well ordered place, and staff are required to spend too much time dealing with disruptive behaviour. This has a negative impact on the progress pupils make in their learning and in the standards they achieve, which are inadequate. Care, guidance and support are inadequate, as shown by the high number of incidents of seriously disruptive behaviour. The systems for supporting individual learning and for meeting pupils' additional needs, especially for improving their behaviour, are not working well enough. Consequently, pupils do not gain easy access to the curriculum. Too many do not improve their attitudes to themselves or to their learning, or take greater control of their behaviour well enough over their time at the school. Many parents and carers are not pleased with the school, and cite as their primary concerns pupils' poor behaviour and the very limited progress their children make in their learning.

Teaching is inadequate and as a result, pupils do not learn enough. This is due particularly to ineffective management of behaviour in lessons and to inconsistent use of assessment information to inform planning. The curriculum for the younger pupils provides a satisfactory match to their needs and capabilities. That for the older pupils is not good enough. Neither the school nor the pupils know where they will move to at the end of Year 9. This makes it very difficult to develop a curriculum over an important stage in pupils' education that has a clear focus, matches with their needs and aspirations, is seen as relevant by them and prepares them well for transition to the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management have until recently been ineffective in moving the school forward. The new headteacher has established a clear vision for improving the school with a strong focus on raising achievement and dealing with disruptive behaviour. However, monitoring procedures are not yet sufficiently rigorous and assessment information is not yet used well enough to identify fully priorities for development and to inform planning.

The outreach provision is working well. Staff in the Borough's mainstream schools regard it as a valued resource.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards through more rigorous monitoring and better use of assessment to inform lesson planning.
- Improve behaviour by implementing more effective policies and procedures to engage pupils more in their learning.
- Raise attendance levels by working more effectively with pupils and their families and carers.

- Increase pupils' motivation by improving curriculum opportunities, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and by seeking to clarify pupils' future destinations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The standards pupils attain are well below average. Despite their difficulties with learning, and for many pupils a history of disruptive schooling, the achievement of both boys and girls is not good enough. The school's own data provide persuasive evidence that older pupils in particular make too little progress in English, mathematics and science, and this is a concern expressed by parents and carers. Many pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, have a serious difficulty in accepting that the school is a good place to be and they make too little effort to learn. Their poor attitudes, which in many lessons are easily seen in their inappropriate responses to the requests of staff, and their generally poor behaviour, are the primary reasons for their low achievement. Poor behaviour also restricts the progress of others who have a greater desire to benefit from being at the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is inadequate. Behaviour is poor. The school has evidence of a reducing number of serious behaviour incidents, but the number remains too high for the school to be a calm place where pupils feel safe and secure and can develop well enough as young people, or attend fully to their learning. Many parents are aware of the high level of verbal aggression and of incidents of physical aggression between pupils, and between pupils and staff, and are anxious about the effect of these on their children.

Attendance for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good. For pupils in Years 7 to 9 it is poor and too low for them to gain consistent benefit from what the school offers. Older pupils in particular have a negative attitude towards the school as a community. They openly say that they do not enjoy being at school, or their lessons. This is shown in the poor way that they are developing their social and learning skills, which leave them inadequately prepared for their futures.

Pupils develop a satisfactory awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. A good attempt is made to make pupils aware of the need for healthy eating and for being active as part of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils appreciate the lunches, made up mostly of healthy foods.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is inadequate and too many pupils make too little progress. The most significant reason for ineffective teaching is the inability of teachers to keep pupils focused on their tasks over the full duration of lessons. In many lessons, learning time is lost because the teachers, and their assistants, need to attend to pupils' disruptive behaviour. This is especially the case in Years 7 to 9. In doing this, they gain too little help from the school's system for rewarding good behaviour and penalising inappropriate behaviour because many pupils do not see it as meaningful. Another significant reason for pupils making too little progress is that assessment information is not used effectively to inform planning. This weakness is enhanced by the fact that many lessons are taught by teachers with little specialist knowledge or training in the

subject. As a result, they have difficulty in always planning lessons that are relevant and interesting. In many subjects, resources to support teaching and learning are inadequate. This is because the recent high turnover of staff has resulted in lack of continuity in all aspects of subject leadership, including the building of adequate resource bases. Generally, classrooms are too small and this limits the strategies teachers can use, for example in planning lessons to practise the skills of investigative learning. Finally, in science especially, but also in music and physical education, the lack of specialist rooms with even basic facilities for the subjects affects the quality of learning by limiting what can be taught and how teaching can occur. Too many pupils do not enjoy their learning and, in too many lessons, only grudgingly accept their role as learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory because it provides a satisfactory match with their needs and pays due regard to national requirements. They are better motivated than older pupils. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate. It does not match well enough with their needs or aspirations and provides too few opportunities to broaden and enrich their learning in preparing them for the next stage of their education. In part, this is because the school does not know where the pupils will move to at the end of Year 9. This makes it extremely difficult to create a set of cohesive learning experiences that are interesting and seen as relevant by pupils. They do not like this situation: as one pupil said, 'I know I have been trouble, but not knowing where I am going after this school makes me think that I have been dumped', a feeling that contributes to the disaffection many of the older pupils show toward the school and to their learning. The headteacher is taking the initiative and is developing two curriculum strands, one for pupils who may be returned to mainstream schools and the other for those who will continue to require a more specialised placement. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this initiative, especially as it is being put in place without secure knowledge of what future placements will be possible.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The legal requirements for safeguarding pupils are met. However, the safeguarding of pupils within the school environment does not work well enough. This is clear from the views of many parents and carers, and the opinion of pupils, on the extent of verbal and physical aggression seen in school. Too regularly, staff are required to attend to outbursts of seriously inappropriate behaviour.

The systems for raising individual achievement in the subjects and for supporting personal development are too weak to be effective in promoting consistent and substantial progress in either. For example, pupils do not have a clear knowledge of their targets or the progress they are making toward them. The school acknowledges this and has introduced new systems for target setting. However, it is too soon to judge their impact.

Specialists from many relevant agencies and services, including the educational psychologist, counsellors, sports coaches and the police, deal appropriately with pupils' additional needs. The programme for personal, social and health education helps raise awareness of the dangers but pupils do not always choose to act accordingly. Not knowing where pupils will move to at the end of Year 9 makes providing effective guidance and support extremely difficult, over an important transition time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

For much of the time since the last inspection, leadership and management have been ineffective and the quality of the provision has deteriorated.

The new headteacher has made a good start in addressing fundamental issues. Staff are beginning to share his vision based on the good and clear targets he is setting for improvement in learning and for promoting a higher quality in personal development, especially in helping pupils improve their behaviour. He has quickly implemented procedures and strategies to meet these targets. These are beginning to have an impact, although it is too early to tell whether they are effective in achieving clear and sustained progress. Self-evaluation is still currently inadequate. The monitoring of standards and provision is not sufficiently rigorous. Relevant data are not systematically gathered and are therefore not used effectively to identify priorities for development and inform planning. These shortcomings in self-evaluation have previously limited the effectiveness of the governors' contribution to monitoring the work of the school. However, there is now a renewed enthusiasm from the governing body and, following recent appointments, a greater capacity for supporting school improvement. In addition, the local authority has recently begun to provide intensive support.

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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
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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longspee School, Poole BH17 8PJ

Thank you for helping us find out about your school. At the moment we do not think Longspee is giving you a good enough education and we have asked for extra help to make sure things improve quickly. We want your school to do much better.

We especially liked the good start your new headteacher has made. He is determined to change the school so that it is better at helping you deal with the difficulties you have, especially in controlling your behaviour, and speeding up the progress you make in your learning. If you help him in this, by making more of an effort to do your best in all your lessons, you will be surprised at how quickly you will learn.

There are a few things that we would like to see improved so that the school is able to make you ready for your next school.

- Your behaviour needs to be better. When you do behave well enough teachers are able to help you make good progress in your learning. But in too many lessons you do not allow this to happen because your behaviour disrupts your learning.
- Some of you need to come to school more often. Attending regularly means that you will be able to make better progress in your learning than you are doing at this time.
- We would like your headteacher to make sure that all of you, especially those of you in Years 7 to 9, are provided with a curriculum that matches well with your needs and is interesting and relevant to you. Also, you need to know where you are going next when you leave the school.
- We would like your headteacher to gather lots of information on how well you are doing in your learning, and on how you are dealing with any difficulties you have, so that the school can find out exactly what needs to be improved. We would also like your teachers to make better use of this information when planning lessons.

Finally, we want to say that with your help Longspee School could improve very quickly. Your headteacher is so determined for this to happen. Those around him, including the governors, now realise how important it is to make the school better.

With best wishes

Alan Dobbins Lead inspector

21 November 2007

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