

# Oswaldtwistle White Ash School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119894
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313437
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Atkinson

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>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	48
6th form	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian Talbot
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Phillipa Conti
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2004
<b>School address</b>	Thwaites Road Oswaldtwistle Accrington Lancashire BB5 4QG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 235772
<b>Fax number</b>	01254 385652

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

White Ash School is a small special school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties with a significant number identified on the autistic spectrum. Almost half of the pupils are in the Further Education Unit (FEU). The school has links with a number of mainstream secondary and primary schools as well as local further education colleges. The school has also established links with specialist services for speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and a third of them are entitled to free school meals. Thirteen pupils are from a minority ethnic background and a bilingual assistant is employed to support pupils and maintain home/school links.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

White Ash is a good school that has made good improvements since its last inspection and gives good value for money. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher lead and manage the school well and with a very clear sense of purpose. They have 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. As a result, students and pupils achieve well and feel safe; they appreciate how well their personal needs are met. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Pupils in the further education unit are given work experience opportunities and, as a result, are well prepared to move on to further education or training. Children with severe and profound learning difficulties have a good start in the Foundation Stage and make good progress. Pupils in all key stages make good progress in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), science and personal and social development because of the consistently good standard of teaching and learning. Teachers' planning is thorough and focuses on making sure that the physical and learning needs of every pupil are met. Staff have high expectations, set individual targets for all students and pupils and are skilled in managing challenging behaviour and complex learning needs. Staff assess students' and pupils' progress on a regular basis, but do not always use this information effectively enough in planning the next steps in individuals' learning. Students and pupils receive very good support in lessons and this leads to good levels of participation as well as high levels of motivation. Lessons are interesting because of the good use of resources that make learning exciting, relevant and accessible to every pupil.

Provision in the FEU is good, but there is room for improvement in its leadership and management to ensure that there is more strategic planning in meeting the complex needs of a very diverse group of young people.

Students' and pupils' personal development is good and is the foundation for many of their successes. They behave exceptionally well and have excellent relationships with each other. Students and pupils enjoy coming to school because they are interested in what they are doing and feel that what they are taught is relevant. They receive good care and support from adults with whom they have excellent relationships. As a result, they are confident in tackling new challenges and work with determination and enthusiasm. Staff work exceptionally well as a team and use their different skills to ensure that each individual's physical, emotional and learning needs are the top priority of the school. The outcome is that students and pupils are relaxed and comfortable throughout the day, have high self-confidence and self-esteem and make good progress in their personal programmes. Parents are extremely appreciative of the availability of and access to a multi-disciplinary team of dedicated staff and comment positively on the impact on the progress and personalised care for their children. As one parent said, 'The school gives lots of opportunities for children to develop their independence and broaden their horizons.' Older students have good opportunities for work related experiences and become more mature in their relationships. As a result, they are well prepared for moving onto the next phase of their lives.

The curriculum is good because of the ways in which it is adapted to meet the personal needs of all students and pupils. The diversity of special needs is fully met and specialist resources and techniques are used well to extend the learning opportunities to all pupils. The attention

to pupils' health is outstanding and reflected in the excellent opportunities for physical movement and exercise, the wide range of sporting activities and clubs and the active promotion of healthy eating. Many students and pupils have excellent involvement in the community. The small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 poses challenges to the school in providing an appropriate and challenging curriculum and insufficient attention has been paid as to how links with the FEU can be used to extend the range of opportunities available for these pupils.

The strengths of the school's provision and the desire for further improvement derive directly from the clarity of the direction provided by leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work collaboratively in supporting and initiating developments in teaching, learning and the curriculum. The leadership and management of subjects are not yet as strong and are a focus for future attention. However, this is a school where priorities are clear, morale is high and staff have a strong sense of belonging.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 2**

The inspection supports the school's view that the overall provision in the FEU is good. The unit is sizable and recruits students from other schools with a very wide range of needs and therefore needs a high level of coordination. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The different teaching groups operate separately and insufficient opportunities are available for joint working and planning. Students' achievements are good and recognised through externally accredited programmes of study. Students are given good guidance and support in completing these accredited courses and students with profound and complex learning difficulties make good progress because of the good teaching and attention to personal detail. Teaching is good. Planning is thorough and relationships between adults and students are excellent and influential in promoting good behaviour and high levels of independence. In addition, students are given good opportunities for work experience so they are well prepared to move on to further education or training.

### **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

#### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children enjoy a good start to their education making good progress in all areas of learning. They receive a high level of personal attention, support and guidance. Their needs are assessed quickly and thoroughly and structured activities and routines are planned to meet their individual needs. The learning environment is adapted to meet their specific physical and personal needs. Communication and social and emotional skills are taught well and enable children to make good progress. Children's physical needs are also managed with great skill. The curriculum is well planned and staff are astute in assessing children's progress. They use this information effectively to plan the next small steps of each child's development. This ensures that children have excellent opportunities to build upon what they are learning and enjoy all aspects of the provision.

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

- Develop the coordination of the curriculum for 14–19 year olds.
- Make consistently better use of the assessment information on individuals' progress in planning the next steps in individuals' learning.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the FEU.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 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 well in English, mathematics, science, ICT and personal and social skills.

This good progress in pupils' basic skills is maintained in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the FEU. Students and pupils also achieve well in creative subjects such as drama and art and design because of the innovative ways in which these subjects are taught. They achieve well in physical education where there is a strong emphasis on the personalised Movement Opportunities Via Education (MOVE) programme, participating in the Sports Partnership and exercising regularly. Students and pupils with complex communication and learning difficulties make good progress, but the use of specialist techniques that use sensory experiences, symbols and pictures to structure their learning activities has not been developed as quickly as the school would like. Pupils whose first language is not English make good progress through the excellent support they receive.

Students in the FEU make good progress in their academic as well as their personal development. The majority attain externally accredited qualifications such as modules in the National Skills Profile, Asdan, Certificate in Life Skills and Towards Independence and Transition Challenge.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' and pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good and a significant strength of the school. Everyone is given significant help in living a healthier lifestyle through the excellent opportunities provided through MOVE and through the support of specialist staff from the health services. Students and pupils eat healthily at school. Food technology lessons help pupils to develop an understanding of how to make appropriate choices and look after themselves independently. The school's positive and supportive ethos is underpinned with well established routines, clear boundaries and a system of rewards. This leads to excellent behaviour, including those young people with particularly challenging behaviours. Adults are very effective in creating an atmosphere where students and pupils feel secure and safe. Consequently, they enjoy coming to school and work to the best of their ability. There is no evidence of any bullying within the school. Attendance is good and above the national average. Everyone has access to good opportunities to participate in the community through the very good inclusion links with other local mainstream schools. Students in the FEU make good progress in their economic well-being because of the focus on achieving skills for living, their positive experiences in supported work-related placements and the opportunities in mini-enterprise learning. As a result, they are well prepared to move on to further education or training.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together, have very good relationships with pupils and use a wide range of strategies and approaches to engage and motivate them. Classrooms are well organised and routines are well established, resulting in a good ethos for learning where pupils feel secure and challenged. A brisk pace is sustained through the skilful involvement of pupils in all the learning activities. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve their individual targets. There are high expectations of what individuals can achieve and challenging behaviour is managed well. Lessons are generally well planned and structured, although on occasions there is scope for teachers to make better use of assessment information when planning activities for a few individuals. A significant strength is how teachers promote the independence of students and pupils and encourage them to make choices and decisions for themselves.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 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 healthier and safer 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 in physical education, residential trips and activities taught by visiting specialists. The small number of pupils in Key Stage 4 and the lack of effective links with the FEU restrict the breadth of the curriculum available for some pupils. Nevertheless, the good opportunities for work experience are influential in motivating older students, widening their horizons and raising their aspirations about what they can do when they leave school.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

This aspect of the school's work is good. This is a very safe and caring school and parents feel their children's personal needs are extremely well catered for. Links with other agencies are very strong and, as a result, pupils and their families feel they are given good advice and support, particularly those pupils with complex learning and physical needs. Arrangements to safeguard students and pupils are very thorough and risk assessments are rigorous. This means that the most vulnerable pupils and those at risk are well supported and given equality of opportunity. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are very secure. All students and pupils are given good guidance and support with their learning targets and this is fundamental to the progress they make and their increased levels of independence.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are good. After a period of instability in the leadership of the school, the recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have quickly established a strong partnership and lead the school with drive, energy and enthusiasm. Their clear vision is fully shared by the staff and, as a result, there is a positive ethos where staff are keen to implement innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. The school's priorities are clearly identified and swift action is being taken to address them. The school has recognised that the role of subject leaders is underdeveloped, particularly their systematic use of assessment information to analyse pupils' progress in their subjects. There is also more scope to sharpen the leadership in the FEU to make sure that the staff work more closely together when planning programmes of study.

Governance is good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and carefully monitor the finances. The morale of the staff is high and new staff are very well supported and developed, resulting in the school's good capacity to improve.



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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?	2	2
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 <sup>1</sup> 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	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	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?	2	2

<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	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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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	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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Oswaldtwistle White Ash School, Lancashire, BB5 4QG

Thank you very much for making me so welcome on the day I came to visit your school. The students in the FEU unit looked after me very well during lunch and I appreciated and would recommend the pizzas! You were all very helpful in telling me why the school was so good and how much you enjoy yourselves. The recent trip to Dublin looked to be fantastic and I was very jealous as it one of my favourite cities. I was very impressed with how mature and sensible you were and how well you all got on as friends and helped each other. You behave excellently and obviously enjoy the many exciting opportunities and activities that the school provides. I agree that you go to a good school because:

- the staff work very hard and are very committed to making sure that you reach your full potential and are happy at school
- you all work very hard, behave very well and get more and more independent as you get older
- the headteacher runs the school well
- the support staff look after your personal needs very well.

It is really important that you make the best out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you will make good progress and have better chances when you leave.

I have discussed with the head what the school can do to get even better and we agreed that the school would look at the curriculum for Key Stage 4 and consider linking it with the FE unit. Staff will also use their assessments of your progress more thoroughly to plan the next steps in your learning. Finally, the school will look at improving the way that staff and groups work together in the FE Unit.

I hope you all carry on working hard and enjoying school. I know that you are very determined young people and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Atkinson

Lead inspector