

# Nether Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120361
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicester City
<b>Inspection number</b>	313588
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Potheary

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>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	54
6th form	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stan Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Erica Dennies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Netherhall Road Leicester LE5 1DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01162 417258
<b>Fax number</b>	01162 417259

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Nether Hall School caters for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties (SLD), a minority of whom have profound and multiple learning difficulties and a small minority whom have additional autistic spectrum disorders or sensory impairment. A minority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and the rest are from a variety of minority ethnic groups, largely British Asian. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for five months following a period of acting headship and deputy headship.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Nether Hall is a good, effective and happy school where pupils of all ages and abilities, including those in the sixth form, make consistently good progress in their subjects and courses. Pupils' and students' personal development and well-being is outstanding, especially in their ability to communicate, act safely and become more independent. Throughout the school, confident young people can be seen sharing their views, helping each other and doing their very best. This success results from good, well organised leadership and management, with a sharp focus on improving the school, particularly at senior level. Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher has resulted in some significant improvements within a very short space of time. Curriculum leaders including those in the sixth form are relatively new to their roles, but they are fully involved in monitoring. Their role in supporting and guiding staff regarding best practice is less well developed and although teaching and learning are good, some inconsistencies remain. Most lessons are planned around thorough assessment of pupils' and students' achievements with a clear focus on individual learning objectives so that all do well. In a few lessons some of the teaching lacks this clear focus and the pace of learning slows.

Behaviour within the school's safe and supportive environment is excellent. The school works exceptionally well with other organisations to support everyone's well-being. This, linked to a high quality system for monitoring how well pupils and students are doing, contributes to outstanding care and guidance, ensuring that their personal and academic achievements are very effectively built upon from year to year.

Standards in all age groups are well below national averages due to the nature of the learning difficulties experienced, but this does not stop each young person achieving well in all that they do. Parents are particularly positive about all aspects of the school and feel, as one parent reported, that 'everyone is so helpful and friendly and staff really care'. Pupils and students show exceptional enjoyment of their time at the school and have considerable enthusiasm, typically saying that lessons are interesting and that they often 'laugh a lot'. The good curriculum is well organised with specialist provision providing a wide range of opportunities to meet everyone's very diverse needs. Creative arts, however, offers a relatively narrow range of opportunities compared with other curriculum areas. Its development has been restricted because until recently there has been no one responsible for leading this curriculum area and the provision within it.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, showing notable kindness and consideration towards each other, good responsibility towards daily tasks such as clearing up after lunch and involvement with charitable fund raising. The end result of all this good and excellent practice is pupils and students who are outstandingly well prepared to go forward to their next placement with skills that will stand them in very good stead for the future.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

All pupils in the school eventually enter the sixth form where they continue to make good progress in their courses and basic skills, and outstanding progress in their personal development. They all leave with qualifications, which reflect their different abilities and interests well. The sixth formers are treated as adults and their base is well suited to their more mature needs. There is a good curriculum and good teaching and learning, appropriately centred in highly

practical contexts which are thoroughly enjoyed. They make a significant contribution to the school in this way and undertake some outstanding voluntary work in the community, such as the ongoing project working in the local park. Students often continue this voluntary work after they leave the school. The very good work to encourage independence continues and sixth formers are confident to communicate and travel around. All sixth formers move on to successful further education or training due to the very high quality care and guidance that they receive. Sixth form management is well focused on improving provision and this is reflected in the recent increase in qualifications achieved.

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

- Improve the role of curriculum leaders in developing best practice, so that lessons are well focused and the pace of learning is consistently good.
- Develop curriculum leadership in the creative arts and widen the range of opportunities offered.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement and progress are good overall, despite attainment on entry and standards throughout the school being well below national averages. Achievements are outstanding in speaking, listening and communication. Pupils and students confidently express their views. This is particularly impressive as almost three quarters of them come from homes where English is not spoken as the first language. Achievements are good in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Pupils' and students' writing skills, although satisfactory, are less advanced, due to more limited opportunities for independent writing. This is being addressed by the school and opportunities are now improving. Some of the more able pupils in Years 10 and 11 make outstanding progress due largely to very high quality teaching for this group. With this exception, all ability and age groups make equally good progress, including autistic pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

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

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school's own measurements of personal development show outstanding progress, especially in the way that pupils and students pay attention, interact and work with each other. All of them make excellent progress in developing their independence. They really enjoy school and attendance is good and improving. Behaviour in and around the school is outstanding. The consideration and gentleness which pupils and students regularly show each other is impressive, and their attitudes to doing well in their work is exemplary. They all have an excellent awareness of how to behave safely and report that they feel very safe at school and that there is no bullying. Everyone also eats a good healthy diet, takes part in plenty of sport and eagerly reports what they should do to keep healthy.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of pupils and students is excellent, as shown, for example, by the very high quality work produced, displaying understanding and respect for the many different cultures within the school and wider community. Pupils' good contribution to the school and wider community includes sitting on the school council, taking increasing

responsibility for themselves and each other, and helping with many aspects of the school day, such as organising the fruit scheme. Sixth formers, as described, make an outstanding contribution in this regard. Pupils' and students' excellent preparation for their futures is evidenced in their successful transition to college and day placements, where not only are students reported to be very happy, but receiving institutions report on how very well prepared they are.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching strategies are highly specialised and meet the needs of the different groups such as those with autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties within the school well. The school council reports that lessons are interesting and usually good fun and so they all work enthusiastically. Highly skilled teaching assistants contribute significantly to this. The development of key skills such as literacy and numeracy is embedded well into the planning of subject lessons. Most lessons, including several that are outstanding, are based upon good quality assessment of how well pupils and students are doing and what they need to learn next. As a result there is a very clear focus on individual learning objectives to enable everyone to achieve their targets and make good progress. In a few lessons the use of assessment to give a clear focus on individual needs is not so effective. It is these inconsistencies that prevent more teaching from being outstanding. For example, there is a lack of pace and less flexible use of smaller groups in some lessons and occasionally opportunities are missed for pupils and students to share their views of how they could do better. Not everyone is fully engaged in these lessons and so the rate of learning slows.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The specialised curriculum is also very well matched to the needs of individuals and groups. This includes separate and appropriate provision for a small group of pupils with severe autism who make excellent progress in their personal development. Pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties also receive an adapted curriculum, which helps them make the very small steps necessary to ensure good progress. Current development is enhancing writing opportunities throughout the curriculum. The good sixth form curriculum is being developed further to expand the range of opportunities provided for work experience and within courses. The school has very strong links with other organisations to provide plenty of visits, visitors, lunchtime clubs and sport, which leads to pupils' and students' good enjoyment and brings their studies to life. The creative arts, such as music and drama, do not provide as wide a range of opportunities as other curriculum areas and this limits pupils' progress in these subjects.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

All necessary procedures for safeguarding pupils and students are very well established. They all receive outstanding guidance to support their excellent personal development, particularly in becoming independent and confident young people. The school is very active and effective in following up anyone who does not attend. The school takes an all encompassing approach to meeting everyone's needs, using the support of a very wide range of agencies in keeping them safe, healthy and progressing as well as they do both personally and academically. The school thoroughly monitors individual progress and checks that pupils and students are on track to meet their targets and that they are guided well in what they need to do to improve. This ensures that they all make at least good progress in their subjects and courses year after year and no one is left behind. Guidance regarding the next steps towards the future is also extremely thorough and the school follows up students who have left, to gauge their success and make sure that placements meet their needs well.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Although leadership and management, including governance, are good overall, leadership by the new headteacher and new deputy headteacher is outstanding in providing a very clear and effective direction to a relatively new staff. Through rapid improvement to several systems, they have quickly driven up standards and achievement, particularly for the more able pupils, for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and also for sixth formers in terms of accreditation. Self-evaluation is good, accurate and based upon a wide range of information obtained through good monitoring procedures. The school knows itself well and is effective in securing improvement, showing a good capacity to improve further.

Information on how well students are doing is extensive and of good quality. School targets are challenging and based soundly on past performance. In seeking to help more pupils and students make excellent progress, the school is currently refining its systems to enable a more accurate comparison to be made with the progress of pupils in similar special schools.

Some curriculum leaders, including the head of sixth form, are relatively new to their posts and their role in improving teaching and learning is still developing. The school recognises that there is more work to be done in establishing best practice in more lessons and so remove the inconsistencies, which lead to slower learning at times.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## 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 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	3
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	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	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

<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	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

28 September 2007

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Nether Hall School, Leicester, LE5 1DT

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

We found your school to be successful, well run and very caring. It is a good school, just like several of you and your parents told us it was. It helps all of you to make good progress in your subjects, to gain many qualifications and to make excellent progress in your personal development. School leaders do a good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. You are responsible, hard-working and behave extremely well. The way you care for and help each other is outstanding and you clearly enjoy coming to school. The school is exceptionally successful at keeping you safe, caring for you and guiding you to do your very best.

Your teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at helping you to do your best and teaching is good. We would like them to make more lessons as good as the very best so that you keep interested for longer and so learn even more. Maybe you can share your ideas of how this might happen.

We were pleased to see that you take plenty of exercise and try to eat a healthy diet. We think that the confident way you sign or make conversation and your increasing independence will stand you in excellent stead for your future lives. Your teachers see to it that you have a good range of subjects and courses to help you learn well and prepare for the future. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities in the arts, such as in drama and music. We are sure that you would find this enjoyable and would help by joining in as much as you could.

We are impressed with the way you help with the smooth running of the school, and particularly the excellent way the sixth form students help in the community.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely Patricia Potheary Lead Inspector

28 September 2007

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Lead Inspector