

The John Fielding Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120751
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313729
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	38
6th form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Herring
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Ashlawn Drive Boston Lincolnshire PE21 9PX
Telephone number	01205 363395
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average-sized special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Around one in five have profound and multiple learning difficulties and a similar proportion have autistic spectrum disorders. Small numbers have physical disabilities or sensory impairment, in addition to severe learning difficulties. Most pupils are White British with just a few from other ethnic backgrounds. A very small number are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school serves a wide rural area. A high proportion of pupils' families are economically disadvantaged.

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 with a number of outstanding features. Pupils make their enthusiasm very evident, through their cheerful arrivals each morning and the long lists of activities they enjoy. Physical pursuits such as riding bikes, dancing, and rebound therapy (using a trampoline) are definite favourites. The good quality curriculum offers a wealth of sporting opportunities, recognised by the Activemark and Sportsmark awards. Pupils' keenness to take part in this healthy exercise is one factor in their outstanding personal development. They learn to take some responsibility for their own safety. For example, older pupils handle sharp knives sensibly when cooking. Social development is another key strength, supported by wide-ranging and regular occasions for pupils to encounter new situations, in and out of school. Their confidence is impressive and means that they are very eager to take on challenges, from reaching out to touch a tortoise to taking part in a public performance of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Such positive attitudes are rooted in the exceptionally good care, guidance and support provided by the school. Every effort is made to safeguard pupils, and staff demonstrate at every turn their respect and affection for each one. A very small number of pupils need a great deal of help in order to manage their behaviour. Nevertheless, as one parent commented, the school has 'an air of calm'. An important source of this is the school's commitment to enabling all pupils to discover the methods of communication that suit them best. This reduces pupils' frustration, because they can make their needs known. Pupils' awareness that staff fully appreciate the significance of a smile or eye movement also enables those with profound and multiple learning difficulties to have some control, however slight, of their learning. The curriculum meets the needs of the sixth form students less well. They do not have enough opportunities that are different from those in Key Stage 4.

Pupils and sixth form students achieve well overall, because they make good progress, in line with the good quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is exceptional in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and so children's learning begins at a remarkable rate. Throughout the school, the teamwork of the staff in each class is a very successful feature. This ensures that pupils experience consistency of care and approaches to learning. Teachers collect a wealth of detailed information about pupils' learning. This is often used well, for example, to identify pupils who would benefit from individual 'booster' sessions. However, other than in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, work in lessons is not always matched accurately enough to what each pupil needs to learn next. Learning slows down for individuals when their tasks are too hard or too easy.

This is a school with very high aspirations. The headteacher's determination to provide as well as possible for every pupil is communicated very effectively to other staff. Excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies and other schools make a significant contribution to this very small school's ability to meet pupils' needs. Monitoring arrangements, which involve the governing body, provide accurate information, for example, about the quality of teaching. This feeds into the detailed and successful plans for moving the school forward. Its good leadership and management provide the school with equally good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

By the time students leave, they have all gained some form of external accreditation to recognise their good achievement. The highest attainers receive the Award Scheme Development and

Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award at Bronze or occasionally Silver levels. Students whose difficulties are more severe or complex are equally successful, for example, in modules of Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) courses. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the care, guidance and support provided is as exceptional as in the school as a whole. Students' personal development is outstanding, because their individual needs are considered carefully so they become increasingly independent. For instance, they learn to take more responsibility when they handle money and cook meals. The curriculum is satisfactory. For most of the time, students work with Key Stage 4 pupils, sharing the same timetable. This provides continuity so, for example, coursework can be completed. However, these arrangements do not provide a sufficiently distinct post-16 curriculum that acknowledges students' status as young adults. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation provides an accurate picture of what is working well and where improvement is needed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The school provides extremely successfully for children in the Nursery and Reception years. The teacher's specialist knowledge and skills help her to lead the area exceptionally well. Developments take place constantly. For example, at the end of lessons the teacher has begun to display photographs of the children at work to reinforce learning and celebrate achievements. The team of support staff shares the teacher's very high expectations. As a result, the quality of teaching and children's achievement are outstanding. Planning is first-rate, focused firmly on each pupil's current targets. All children learn to communicate, for instance, by exchanging symbols or gesturing. This enables them to make giant strides in all areas of learning. The curriculum meets children's needs particularly well and they receive outstanding care, guidance and support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers make full use of their assessments of pupils' learning in order to match work closely to individual needs.
- Increase the opportunities for sixth form students to have experiences that are different from and build on those in Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school sets challenging targets for individual pupils to achieve in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). A high proportion of these are met, representing good progress and achievement. Pupils are particularly successful in learning to communicate and in PSHE. This is due to the consistent focus on these areas during lessons and daily routines. The school has noticed that progress is slower in writing and has put suitable steps in place to provide extra help in this area. During Key Stage 4, most aspects of pupils' work are externally accredited. For instance, they complete modules of the ASDAN Transition Challenge award and ALL courses, in topics such as home management.

Although they often move forward in very small steps, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and sensory impairment achieve just as well as those with less complex difficulties. The good achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is closely linked

to their progress in learning to communicate, often by exchanging symbols. Pupils in the early stages of learning English frequently make very rapid progress, supported by the school's success in teaching communication skills and the use of interpreters when possible.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' enormous enjoyment of school is reflected in above average rates of attendance. They can suggest nothing about the school that they would like to change. Through the school council however, pupils help to make improvements, such as choosing the paint for the cloakrooms. Older pupils and sixth form students in particular make outstanding contributions to the school community by putting out play equipment or caring for the sensory garden. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn to be caring members of society. Those in Key Stage 3 take responsibility for collecting and sorting paper for recycling. Behaviour is outstanding when the nature of some pupils' difficulties is considered. Most learn to control themselves better and other pupils are very understanding when outbursts occur. Pupils' self-help and social skills help to prepare them well for their lives beyond school. Older pupils follow courses in horse management and horticulture, becoming accustomed to working in unfamiliar environments and with different people.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers often choose resources carefully in order to motivate pupils to explore and learn. The sounds, smells, sights and textures that accompanied their story thrilled children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They made huge efforts, for example, to hold a toy vacuum cleaner, beginning to link this to the image displayed on the interactive whiteboard. Lessons encourage pupils to be active and to learn through first-hand experiences. For example, in a science lesson, Key Stage 3 pupils enjoyed finding out for themselves that a tuning fork vibrates. Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to pupils' learning. They also help to collect information about how well pupils have made progress towards their personal targets. However, in most classes, inconsistent use is made of this information. Lessons invariably meet the needs of the majority of pupils, but too often, they lack the fine-tuning needed to ensure that every pupil is challenged and experiences success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' diverse needs are met well. The curriculum is flexible enough to enable special arrangements to be made for groups or individuals. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught together in a separate class for part of each day, in an environment that allows them to focus more easily on the varied sensory experiences. On other occasions, pupils choose activities such as sport or pottery, pursuing particular interests. Clubs, for example, gardening or choir, are also popular and enhance learning and personal

development. Visits, including residential stays as far afield as France, extend pupils' experience and develop a range of personal skills. Special days enable topics, bird watching for instance, to be studied in depth. Despite its many strengths, the curriculum is not outstanding, because work-related learning is not fully developed and does not, for example, include enterprise activities in Key stage 4 or the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Arrangements such as those for child protection are very thorough and effective. Very careful attention is paid to minimising risks, for example, when pupils are going on visits. Detailed individual care plans are constructed as necessary, for instance, to improve pupils' behaviour or ensure that they are moved or repositioned safely. Agencies such as social services, therapists, Connexions and the school nurse all support and enhance the school's work. Staff training is wide ranging and regular. Consequently, pupils say that they feel safe and all have someone to approach if they are sad or worried. Particularly vulnerable pupils are cared for very comprehensively. Parents are also offered support, to encourage consistent approaches to managing behaviour, for example. The Healthy Schools award recognises the school's efforts to promote healthy lifestyles. In some classes, pupils' individual targets are displayed using words and symbols that they can understand. However, this helpful approach is not universal.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher has very successfully spearheaded a wide range of improvements since the previous inspection. With so few teachers, the headteacher and senior staff undertake a great many tasks. These are carried out to a high standard. Information from teachers' assessments of pupils' learning and their progress towards targets is often used well to identify individuals who need additional support but is not always analysed systematically to identify trends in achievement. When patterns are noted, firm and effective action is taken. For example, pupils with Downs Syndrome appeared to be making slower progress than others. A sharper focus on their communication skills has reversed this tendency. The scope of the work of the governing body has increased significantly in recent years. Governors now find out more about the school at first hand and fulfil their responsibilities well.

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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	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	1	
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	

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	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	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	
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

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The John Fielding Community Special School, Boston, PE21 9PX

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I know that you find reading hard so your teachers will tell you about this letter.

I was very pleased to see and hear how much you enjoy coming to school. I'm not surprised, because you have so many interesting things to do. You also told me that you feel safe. This is because the adults in school look after you very carefully indeed. They also encourage you to be healthy by giving you plenty of activities, such as riding bikes, rebound and dancing, to help you keep fit.

You learn a lot because you have good teachers. The youngest children learn especially fast. I think older pupils could learn faster if their work was sometimes a bit harder. Your headteacher and the teachers are always thinking of ways to make your school even better. I want them to split up the Senior Class more often, so the oldest students have more time together to get ready for leaving school.

You and your mums and dads think you go to a good school. I agree. Well done to everyone! I want to send each one of you my best wishes for good health and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Eaton

Lead Inspector