

The Pilgrim School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120753
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313730
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Thornalley
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Seymour
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	4th Floor Sibsey Road Fishtoft Boston PE21 9QS
Telephone number	01205445641
Fax number	01205368151

Age group	4–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils from the whole of Lincolnshire referred because they have medical or mental health conditions, are pregnant or are teenage mothers. Pupils attend for anything from a few days to over two years. At entry, most pupils' attainment is below average because of their medical conditions or a history of non-attendance. Nearly all the pupils on roll are also registered at their own schools. The school aims to enable pupils to continue with their education, return to mainstream schools where appropriate and prepare for transition to adult life through further education, training or employment. The school operates on many sites, including four sites where pupils are taught in groups. These are at hospitals in Boston and Lincoln and at centres in Market Deeping and Mablethorpe. It also runs a countywide outreach service for pupils who are taught at home and in other settings, mainly by supply teachers. Since the last inspection, this service has merged with the hospital school and is governed by it on behalf of the local authority. There has also been an increase in the proportion of pupils with autism. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils from minority ethnic groups or children in the Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree that this is a good school but judge that it also has outstanding features. Good leadership and management are instrumental in securing and developing the effectiveness of the school's provision. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership; she has a crystal clear vision for the school and sets the tone for its most caring ethos.

The school provides outstanding care in partnership with a wealth of other agencies and professionals. Exceptionally high quality support underpins pupils' outstanding personal development. This is a factor recognised and appreciated by pupils and parents alike. A parent, typically, wrote, 'I cannot praise too highly the standard of care that the school and its staff have provided.' Pupils recognise the huge steps they have taken in their aspirations and personal adjustment. One who had secured a place on a further education course wrote, 'I never even thought I would want to go to college' and described how finding that there were others with 'anxieties like mine made me feel less like an alien'. Pupils make great strides in dealing with their medical conditions, emotions and fears. The school successfully re-engages them in education and enables most to reintegrate into mainstream schools or go on to further education or training. Their attitudes to education improve significantly and they begin to enjoy learning again. Staff successfully encourage them to lead a healthy lifestyle and ensure that they know how to maintain their personal safety. Where it is appropriate, pupils contribute well by showing concern for others and raising funds for less fortunate people. Their life chances improve greatly as they improve their basic skills, develop their ability to work with others and grow in self-awareness and self-confidence.

When pupils are referred to the school they have often fallen behind because they have missed schooling, although levels of attainment vary widely. In general, standards remain below average when pupils leave the school. Whilst at The Pilgrim, pupils make good progress. This is associated with the good teaching and a well-tailored curriculum. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well. Each pupil has a personal programme thoughtfully matched to his or her immediate individual needs. However, for a small number of pupils with statements of special educational needs that name only The Pilgrim School, the school cannot match the provision described. The school is well aware of this and has started a dialogue with the local authority in an attempt to rectify this. Where statements show clear, sensible short-term goals, and provision that it can realistically provide, the school is able to meet its obligation.

Self-evaluation is good. It is accurate and correctly identifies areas of strengths and priorities for development that are incorporated into a plan that drives improvement well. This has enabled the school to make good improvement since the last inspection and there is a good capacity to improve further. The school has worked hard to develop a means of evaluating its success in terms of gains made by pupils in developing personally and academically. It now has suitable means of measuring its impact on pupils' personal development and attainment, although it is at an early stage of collecting data. The headteacher is working with colleagues from similar schools nationally to develop a way of comparing the school's performance with that of others.

What the school should do to improve further

- Liaise with the local authority to ensure that statements of special educational needs identify the short-term objectives and realistic provision for pupils placed at the school.

- Establish systematic and rigorous analysis of assessment information across the school to show the value that is added to pupils' personal and academic development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards vary widely on entry and exit but are generally below average. However, whatever their starting points, pupils achieve well in their time at the school because they are taught well and provided with a curriculum that matches their immediate needs. They make good progress towards the measurable educational targets identified on their individual learning plans. However, not all targets are measurable, so the school cannot always measure progress. The move to more teaching of pupils in groups has made it possible to extend hours of weekly teaching. The school has also been able to increase the range of subjects that pupils study and the range of accredited courses available. Both changes have increased the progress that pupils make. Pupils' progress is carefully reviewed every three months, and occasionally more frequently. Staff quickly intervene to support pupils who need additional support and this is provided, which helps to maximise progress. The school now has a system of measuring academic gains over time, and is training all staff in its use. Year 11 pupils leave with accreditation at an appropriate level, ranging from GCSE to basic skills and this helps them to secure a place in further education, training or employment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils respond very positively to the opportunities the school offers them to re-engage with learning. Many achieve good attendance after long periods of non-attendance at school. Pupils with only a brief encounter with teachers in the school leave hospital with an achievement they are proud of, for example a young patient who in minutes learned a trick to remember her nine times table. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem grow immensely as they begin to interact with others in social situations and take increasing responsibility for themselves. They build most effectively on this by showing an increased awareness of the needs of others and this is demonstrated by their willingness to raise funds for charities. Parents are especially delighted by their children's personal development; 'For the first time my child is achieving and I am so proud.' Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils show a growing awareness of how to keep themselves safe and lead a healthy lifestyle through sensible diet and exercise where possible. The rapid improvement in self-awareness, aspirations, adjustment, sociability, basic skills and the ability to work with others increases greatly pupils' chances of future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships with pupils are very strong and teachers miss no opportunity to raise pupils' self-esteem. Because of this, pupils grow into confident and well-motivated learners. Parents are often surprised by improvements in the content, amount and quality of their children's work. Teachers know pupils very well and thorough assessment enables them to plan suitably challenging tasks. Teachers keep detailed records showing how well pupils have coped and progressed in each lesson. They are skilled in assessing the challenge of activities for pupils

who may only be a short time in the school. Pupils are well supported and often have individual attention. Staff are sensitive to the pace of learning for those who may be very tired from their illnesses, who have little stamina or ability to concentrate for long. Effective use of new technology enables pupils to complete modules of work at home and other resources are chosen well to bring learning to life, for instance simulating a Victorian school setting with a dunce's hat, a slate and chalk. Pupils are regularly involved in assessing their own learning and good feedback ensures that they know how they can improve their work. Occasionally, pupils find it difficult to identify what they have learned in a lesson because teachers have not made learning objectives clear to pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is very well tailored to the needs of most pupils. Most have well over the minimum five hours required when children are taught at home. There is a suitable emphasis on basic skills and each pupil's programme is designed to reflect their interests and aspirations. There is a good range of subject expertise amongst teaching staff. Many pupils study towards a good selection of accredited courses such as GCSE, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, courses through Open College Network and Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Subjects range from art, geography and science to business studies and food technology. Good use is made of information and communication technology to enable pupils to learn at home and to broaden the curriculum, by utilising simulations of science investigations, for instance. Personal and social development are especially well provided for. For pregnant teenagers, childcare, 'Young Mums' and related courses are arranged. There are good work experience and careers options for other pupils. Many outside providers help to make pupils' learning opportunities very rich, relevant and accessible. These include Connexions for careers advice, the Youth Service, and the Chronic Fatigue Service. Occasionally, staff organise special events, which add to pupils' enjoyment, such as a trip to the Titanic museum at Peterborough, or hold a 'one-pupil sports day' at home. For a small number of pupils with statements of special educational need that name only The Pilgrim School, however, the school cannot provide what is prescribed on the statement, particularly access to the full National Curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is an exceptionally strong commitment to ensuring that pupils feel safe and secure so that they may enjoy their learning and achieve as well as they are able. The time and effort given to supporting pupils is immense as staff go to great lengths to bring together support agencies, pupil's schools and families to help pupils start learning again. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are good. Risk assessments are completed scrupulously. Staff are especially knowledgeable in managing pupils' anxiety, for example by identifying that a sensory session would help to calm a pupil before lessons. Parents are delighted with the way the school deals with their children especially where pupils may have been out of education for a considerable time. One noted that 'This is the first teacher who has actually tried to understand how to help my child'. Personal support is excellent and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. The learning mentor successfully builds a bridge between home and school for supporting behaviour and learning. Staff are skilled in identifying specific help for pupils such as childcare arrangements for teenage mothers. Good links to the Connexions service provides very effective guidance for the next stage in their lives. Pupils are fully involved in setting and reviewing the

targets on their individual learning plans and the high quality feedback that they get from staff enables them to recognise successes as well as identify areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school successfully meets its aims. The merging of the school and outreach service since the last inspection has contributed well to improvement. A revised management structure has shared responsibilities more widely, which has helped particularly in relation to tracking pupils' progress. There is now a suitable means of evaluating pupils' personal development as well as academic gains. All staff with responsibilities discharge these well. For staff on contracts, there are good arrangements for the development of their professional skills and performance review. The headteacher and governors have a vision of a school where all staff are on contract, but at present annual budgets preclude this. Nevertheless, the challenge of assuring the quality of a large number of supply staff in such a large geographical area is met well within existing resources. Good, detailed guidance is provided for all staff about what is expected and monitoring is effective in improving provision. All staff have access to training, time to prepare lessons and for assessment. The school responds well to changes, such as the influx of pupils with autism, by ensuring that staff are well prepared to meet these needs. Governance is good; governors are most supportive, and they hold the school to account, through focused visits, for example.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
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
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

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
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Pilgrim School, Boston, PE21 9QS

Thank you for making us so welcome on our visits to you on the wards, at centres, schools and in your homes too. We would also like to thank your parents, especially the ones who wrote to us, welcomed us into their homes and talked to us about how the school has helped you.

We were delighted to find how much you and your parents appreciate all the help that the school gives you. It is certainly a good school and in some ways it is outstanding. The staff do a huge amount to care for, help and support you. They work with many others to make sure that you have all the support you need. As a result, you are able to grow in self-confidence, understand your feelings and emotions and get back to learning again. Because you are taught so well and each of you has an individual programme of work that matches well what you need and want to learn, you are making good progress. We were pleased to see older pupils working towards examination courses that will help them move on to further studies and get employment in the future. We were impressed with your excellent behaviour and encouraged to see that some groups have worked together on projects to raise funds for others who are less fortunate, such as those in a hospice. We were pleased to find that you feel safe in the school and are learning how to lead a healthy lifestyle and keep yourselves safe. Some of you are also finding out how to look after young children and be good parents.

The staff and governors know what they need to do to make the school even better and we are confident that they will go from strength to strength. They have found a way of measuring how much you all improve academically and how well you mature, and are going to develop this further. They are also going to make sure that where you have a statement, this shows what the school can do to help you improve in the short time that you are at The Pilgrim.

We wish you all the very best in future and hope that you will keep up the good work.

S Aldridge

Lead inspector