

Harford Manor School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121264
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313927
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	75
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Reeves
Headteacher	Mr G Kitchen
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	43 Ipswich Road Norwich NR2 2LN
Telephone number	01603 451809
Fax number	01603 453508

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school has 75 pupils on roll who all have statements of special educational needs. Currently, there are hardly any pre-school age children on roll and there are 17 post-school age students. There are roughly equal numbers of pupils with severe learning difficulties and those additionally with autism spectrum disorders. This is the great majority of pupils. A few have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Nearly all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and they come from all parts of Norfolk. Six are looked after by their local authority.

The main aim of the school is preparing its pupils to play as full and an effective part in life as possible. There are opportunities for pupils to spend time in mainstream schools and the school has made several links with the community and voluntary organisations.

The school has Artsmark, the Eco-School and Quality in Study Support awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Harford Manor School is truly outstanding in meeting the needs of its pupils. It has for many years been a school with a reputation of being highly effective. It was a very good school at the time of its last inspection, and has continued to improve extremely well since then.

Excellent leadership and management at every level of the school's work, together with the headteacher's strong direction and high expectations, give the school an exceptional capacity for further improvement. Governors are very committed and closely involved in the work of the school. They stay very well informed, primarily through positive working relationships with the headteacher and all of the staff. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation mean that governors and senior leaders know the school very well. They ensure that educational provision is being continually developed and refined to be increasingly effective. However, the school has not yet engaged to any great extent in the close analysis of its pupils' performance. A computer based system is being introduced for this purpose. Teachers' assessments, at present, do not use statistical data enough alongside their accurate observations and detailed records of pupils' progress.

The leadership and management are absolutely committed to ensuring that the school is fully equipped to educate, care for and support, all pupils. Managing the performance of every member of staff and providing training are a mainstay in helping the school achieve its high quality of educational provision. Strong, well-established partnerships with parents, schools, colleges, careers advisers and therapists make significant contributions to the school's provision. The school meets the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties really effectively. Although it has had less time to turn its hand to dealing with pupils with severe learning difficulties who also have autism spectrum disorders, the knowledge and skill being applied here is outstanding, as a result of developing the staff's expertise.

The majority of parents contributed their views to the inspection. Overwhelmingly, these are exceptionally positive with comments like, 'This is a fantastic school,' 'The school works very hard in the interests of children and is a wonderfully happy, safe, and loving place'.

Pupils achieve outstandingly well because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive and because their work and activities are so well matched to their various needs. A combination of excellent staff expertise, detailed knowledge of pupils and thorough planning results in an outstanding quality of teaching and learning. Lessons are lively, engaging and challenging. An extremely well-planned curriculum is sharply focused on developing key skills all the way from the excellent Foundation Stage to the outstanding further education department. Progress is rapid in developing communication through speaking and listening, or by the use of signs and symbols. The particular emphasis on pupils using and applying what they learn in shops and on buses, for example, boosts their progress. The close focus on preparation for life after school has created excellent provision for work related learning and a great choice of accredited vocational courses. Pupils' personal development is integral to what they learn in lessons and to the exceptional preparation they receive for the future. Pupils with autism spectrum disorders in particular do really well in meeting teacher's expectations by following routines and taking part in lessons. They behave very well, which is exceptional, and find the confidence to make friends. For all pupils, an amazingly broad and enriched

curriculum provides all sorts of opportunities, through many club activities, in and after school, to extend their interests and develop friendships, allowing them to grow in confidence.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The further education department benefits from excellent leadership and is extremely effective in meeting the needs arising from students' severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. The priority placed on preparing students for the future reflects fully the school's main aim. The curriculum is skilfully devised to ensure that it is very relevant to the realities and opportunities students will encounter later in life. This gives a sharp focus to personal development and consequently students' independence and self-confidence are exceedingly well developed. A significant proportion of students' learning opportunities are based in the community. They get enormous benefits from using and applying knowledge and skills in real situations. Work-related learning, work experience, accredited courses, college links and a strong partnership with the Connexions service all add up to exceptional provision and support for each student. Outstanding teaching and learning ensures students make very rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well in developing all the skills they will need in managing their independence, pursuing their interests and being gainfully employed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision for the few children in the Foundation Stage, who are taught alongside the pupils in Key Stage 1, is outstanding. Their progress in acquiring classroom routines and in their readiness to learn is very rapid. Children soon form positive relationships with staff and pupils and begin to really enjoy school. Very effective teaching encourages children's confidence to communicate and to be independent. The Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding in ensuring there are many opportunities for children to learn through play and sensory experiences as well as acquiring the skills to communicate. The creative use of music helps pupils to experience classroom routines and learning as fun. Thorough assessments measure children's physical, medical, social and learning needs. These allow teachers to plan activities which closely match each child's needs with all the early learning goals. As a result, teaching and the care, guidance and support for children are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the link between teachers' assessments and the data required for the analysis of pupils' performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Throughout school, pupils make excellent progress as a result of the outstanding quality of education. This is because all staff know the pupils incredibly well. They are expert at meeting their particular needs. They plan work for the pupils which is sharply focused and relevant, and this leads to exceedingly high levels of achievement for the pupils. Firmly established approaches for supporting pupils with autism spectrum disorders ensure that they overcome many of their barriers to learning. These pupils become very good at engaging in lessons, most importantly,

paying attention for extended periods of time, remembering routines and contributing positively. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught very effectively, enjoying and interacting really well in response to lesson activities. The many opportunities to learn in situations outside school contribute significantly to pupils' achievement. They cope exceptionally well with the demands of travelling and dealing with many different everyday transactions. In this respect, in particular, students in the further education department make excellent progress in preparing for the future. Sixth form students and Key Stage 4 pupils achieve exceedingly well in the accredited vocational courses they pursue. The strong links with mainstream schools mean that pupils can pursue a particular talent.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils are extremely happy and secure in school and they are very keen to contribute and work hard. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent. They make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils are confident, social individuals who behave in a safe and sensible way. Many parents praise the school for the way it encourages their children's independence and maturity. The pupils do a wide variety of jobs around the school, which is a good preparation for the experience of work later on. The many opportunities to visit and work in the locality outside school helps pupils make a positive contribution in the wider world. The school council plays an active part in the school's improvement and through its consultations and meetings is really representative of pupils' views. Pupils participate fully and enthusiastically in keeping fit and they eat healthily. They take regular physical exercise, which they find fun and it helps build their physical and mental alertness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers and support assistants work together in extremely effective ways. Classroom teams are exceptionally skilled and experienced in meeting pupils' needs, which is the result of the schools extensive programme of staff training. Staff respond really well to pupils' many different needs and manage their high level of challenging behaviour with great skill. Any reluctance in pupils towards, or avoidance of, new experiences is quickly overcome. Lessons are planned in considerable detail, identifying clear purposes for the session, which are matched very closely to each pupil's capabilities. Moreover, planning reflects very clearly pupils' different learning difficulties and the best approaches to teaching them, for autism spectrum disorders in particular. Resources are thought out carefully and good use is made of information and communication technology. Staff assess their pupils very effectively and come to know them very well. As a result, pupils are relaxed and confident in lessons and they enjoy learning. Teaching is lively and engaging, and it gets pupils well involved in answering questions, working together or role-playing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned. The work and activities are highly motivating. The school makes very effective use of music, art, drama and multi-sensory resources to stimulate and engage pupils. There is a sharp focus on communication as well as personal development. This helps pupils to interact positively, form good friendships and to be self-sufficient. The number and variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs is exceptional. The small number of girls in the school have their own club. Older girls from a mainstream school provide support for music, massage and cosmetic activities. The curriculum is extended effectively by many links with the local community, including many visitors to the school. Pupils travel on buses, use many local amenities, join the youth clubs and go on residential visits. Schools and colleges provide courses in horticulture and animal care and the choice of accredited courses is good. Pupils and students undertake work experience at a sports centre, garden centre and children's nursery. As part of their citizenship programme they help to look after the gardens of a home for the elderly. Careers support extends to making visits to possible future colleges and placements, frequently accompanied by the Connexions adviser and parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is exceptionally effective in providing pupils with a secure and friendly environment in which each individual is valued and thrives. It works in a very close partnership with parents and many agencies ensuring each pupil's preparation for ultimately leaving school is as good as it can be. One parent's words captured the views of a great many in saying, 'This is a truly wonderful school, with a lovely atmosphere that hits you as soon as you arrive'. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and assuring their health and safety are rigorous and well implemented. The support for pupils who find it difficult to behave well at all times is outstanding. The extensive amount of training all staff undertake results in teams that are extremely skilled in managing behaviour and looking after pupils' needs. Pupils get good support from the many visiting specialists. The speech and language therapists are instrumental in pupils improving their communication skills. Pupils' progress is assessed thoroughly. However, assessment procedures are not yet fully embedded into a new computer assisted system for tracking pupils' performance in relation to national attainment scales for pupils with severe learning difficulties and other learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher is an excellent leader, setting a very clear direction that has established a strong sense of purpose across the school. The school's main aims of preparing pupils for their future, whilst enabling them to play an active part in the community, is deeply embedded in the work of the school. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is both systematic and rigorous and consequently it knows its strengths and the few relative weaknesses. Governors

make a very effective contribution to the success of the school through their active support for its work. They are kept very well informed of the school's progress by staff and through their regular visits to classrooms. The school's educational provision, teaching and the curriculum in particular, are extremely finely tuned, ensuring that pupils make maximum progress. The great many leadership roles staff share are carried out with considerable dedication and effectiveness. This has led to the school gaining many awards, for example in Quality in Study Support, although no awards can fully reflect the sheer quality of the school's overall achievements. The capacity for future success and further improvement is, therefore, immense.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

10 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harford Manor School, Norwich NR2 2LN

Many thanks to you all for your warm welcome, interest and helpfulness when we visited recently to inspect your school.

We very quickly found out that your school is one of the best there is because:

- your headteacher and the staff have done a fantastic job making your education a really good one
- all of the staff are very able and willing to help you learn and make progress
- you are making great progress in gaining the experience and skills that will give you every chance of success when you come to leave school
- you are learning to be confident, independent, friendly and to cope with the everyday demands of life
- you behave very well and keep yourself and each other safe
- there are lots of activities, clubs in particular, which help you enjoy school, stay fit and healthy
- you are always helpful in school and very willing to contribute wherever and whenever you can.

You have played a big part in your school being one of the best. There is not much we can recommend to your headteacher that will help improve your school. However, we have said staff should push ahead on ways of measuring your progress even more accurately than at present.

We both wish you all the very best for the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector