

Wren Spinney Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122158
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314225
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Arnalena Bee

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	57
6th form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cain
Headteacher	Debbie Withers
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Westover Road off Westhill Drive Kettering NN15 7LB
Telephone number	01536 481939
Fax number	01536 312689

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils who attend Wren Spinney have severe, or profound and multiple learning difficulties. The number of pupils with autism has increased since the previous inspection. Pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds.

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. Most pupils find it very hard to explain how much they enjoy their time in this safe and calm environment that is created for them. However, pupils' enthusiasm in all that they do and the excellent relationships they develop with each other and the adults who work with them speak louder than any words. When asked what they like best they say, 'teachers', 'lessons' and 'dinners'. What is done particularly well is the way each pupil is treated as a special individual. Pupils, as a result, gain confidence and greatly respect all who help them because of this strong focus on pupils' personal development. As one parent wrote, 'I cannot praise the staff enough. My son is a happy, sociable boy who gains tremendously from the school environment.' Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good overall. However, their understanding of other cultures is limited. Pupils gain an excellent idea of how they can try to be healthy. They grow vegetables in the school garden and then make dishes such as soup and ratatouille, which are added to the lunch menu. Pupils have good opportunities to take exercise both in school and during out-of-school clubs. They speak very enthusiastically about going horse riding. Behaviour is good and any challenging behaviour is managed well. Pupils learn well how to keep themselves safe, not only while in school but also when they are near busy roads. While talking about dangers in school and at home, one pupil gave a very good demonstration of the dangers of electricity while another helped her by adding the word 'electrocuted'. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. Pupils are rarely absent unless they are ill. One parent said, 'My son doesn't like the days he cannot go to school.' Parents agree that pupils are very well cared for during their time in school. Adults collect a wealth of information on individuals and use this to ensure that each pupil receives the good support that is necessary for them to achieve well both personally and academically. Achievement is good, in both the main school and the sixth form. This is because progress is carefully monitored and each pupil follows a well organised curriculum that is tailor-made to suit his or her needs. In addition, teachers plan lessons which are interesting and exciting and which stimulate the pupils well. As a result, learning in most lessons is good. Standards are exceptionally low because of the pupils' learning difficulties. The school is well led and managed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been a good focus on developing communication, and speaking and listening skills. As a result, teaching aids to promote the spoken word, signing and the use of symbols and pictures are generally used well to allow pupils to improve and develop a better understanding of spoken and written English. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used in a variety of ways to enhance and reinforce learning. Links with agencies to support the specific needs of pupils are very good. In addition, links with local mainstream schools are good. College links have improved but are still limited to a few students. Similarly, some pupils in Key Stage 4 do not have sufficient opportunities to experience the world of work outside the school environment.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is well led and managed. Students receive very good day-to-day care. In addition, they are given good quality support to enable them to achieve well as they develop personally and academically. Teaching is good in almost all lessons but occasionally communication aids are not used sufficiently to enable all pupils to be engaged in conversation. All students receive a curriculum that is adapted well to suit their particular learning difficulties. As a result, the

progress that they make is good as they work through accreditations achieved through the Asdan Towards Independence Programme. Some students with severe learning difficulties select courses because of a personal interest. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are challenged well to work towards up to five accreditations which includes the module 'Multi-Sensory Experiences'. The opportunities to develop skills and knowledge outside school have improved since the previous inspection but links with colleges and the world of work continue to be limited.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the opportunities for out-of-school work-related placements and college courses.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the different cultures in our society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The achievement pupils make throughout the school, both in their academic and personal development, is good. Systems which show how well pupils are doing are effective and clearly identify the progress pupils make. School data show that pupils make better progress as they develop personal and social skills than in other subjects. The very few pupils who have not made the progress expected of them have had medical problems or behaviour has affected their learning. Standards are exceptionally low because of the severity of the pupils' special educational needs. Pupils do well because the curriculum is personalised to meet their individual needs. In addition, the support that pupils receive during lessons is good and enables them to learn well. Parents are very pleased with how their children are doing. As one parent said, 'My son has progressed fantastically since joining the school.' Another said, 'The teachers work very hard to enable the children to make good progress.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

By the time pupils leave the school, they have achieved well academically and have developed a good range of personal and social skills. Their self-esteem increases steadily because whatever they do, adults celebrate all of the small steps they make. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders become less anxious and able to cope better. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties make enormous efforts to communicate and co-operate with the adults who work with them. Social and moral development is reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their ability to learn alongside each other, and their trust in those who support them. Cultural development is not as strong. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school and local community. For example, they make chutney using some of the fruit and vegetables they grow themselves and then sell it to raise money. Pupils make a good contribution to community projects such as making hanging baskets and raising money for local and world charities. Recently they received the second prize in a local show when they exhibited a pumpkin that they had grown.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers and the adults who work with them support the pupils sensitively and work effectively together. Consequently, learning is good in almost all lessons. Relationships between all adults and pupils are very good. This results in pupils having extremely positive attitudes to learning. Activities are interesting, exciting and well suited to pupils' specific needs. Various methods, such as using electronic equipment or symbols, are used effectively to enable pupils to communicate more successfully. Symbols or pictures are generally used well to enable pupils to gain a clearer understanding and more confidence as they learn. However, at times, opportunities are missed to use visual cues to stop calling out or to promote basic writing skills. Pupils say they are doing well. They know this because they are consistently updated about their progress. Praise is used well in all classes to inform and encourage pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

All pupils receive a curriculum that has been adapted well to meet their personal, social and academic needs. There is a good focus on the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE), life skills and the skills needed for working independently and communicating. The curriculum is broadened by a good focus on National Curriculum subjects. Good links with local mainstream schools enable a few pupils to be integrated with them, where possible.

Extra-curricular activities that pupils take part in promote particularly well PSHE, music and the physical education programme. Cohort Days focus on relevant themes such as the World Cup and 'people who help us'. Enterprise Week for older pupils enables them to work together and make a product. Pupils were seen thoroughly enjoying themselves as they made Christmas Cards to sell. They dressed up as Christmas figures and took photographs of each other. Activities such as these promote very well pupils' awareness of life outside school, as well as their ICT and personal skills. Pupils make good progress in school in acquiring the competences needed for the world of work. However, opportunities for older pupils to take part in work experiences outside school are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The strong pastoral care and the good support and guidance that pupils receive is an important factor in the success of the school. Parents appreciate this and say they are particularly pleased with how quickly and easily their children settle into school when they transfer from primary school. Links with support agencies to help provide for specific needs are good. In addition, adults who work in school are very aware of the pupils' difficulties and support them well in all that they do both personally and academically. Despite their knowledge of their day-to-day progress, the pupils' are less aware of their longer-term targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and assistant headteacher work closely together to ensure that all staff are focused on continuously improving what the school provides and how well the pupils do. The headteacher is aware that although self-evaluation is effective, not all governors are sufficiently involved in this process. There have been some improvements. Governors have recently been involved in analysing school data. Governors are generally supportive and do challenge the school at times. Systems in use by school staff for monitoring and evaluating how well the school is doing are good. Pupils' progress in all subject areas is regularly reviewed. The subject leaders have made a good start in monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning and the curriculum provision in their subject areas. As a result, the school has a complete and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. It has a good capacity to improve further.

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 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	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	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	1	
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	2
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

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	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 7 November 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Wren Spinney Community Special School, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN15 7LB You may remember that we came to visit your school to see how you were getting on. We were so pleased to see how much you really like coming to school. We especially liked talking to you about what you like doing best. We think you go to a good school that is well led and managed. Your parents think so too. We are writing to let you know what we liked best about your school. You are very well cared for and looked after. You learn well because teaching is good. The teachers and the other people who help you plan activities that really suit your individual needs well. We think that you learn lots about how to keep healthy. We were very impressed with how you grow fruit and vegetables and make things, like soup, for lunch. By the time you leave school you have made good progress learning skills that will help you in the world of work. We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better.
- Plan more activities so that you can learn more about the different cultures of people who live in our country.
- Develop more opportunities for you to learn about what it is like to be in the world of work, outside school. Keep smiling and having fun as you learn. Best wishes Nina Bee Lead inspector

7 November 2007

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Wren Spinney Community Special School, Kettering,
Northamptonshire, NN15 7LB**

You may remember that we came to visit your school to see how you were getting on. We were so pleased to see how much you really like coming to school. We especially liked talking to you about what you like doing best. We think you go to a good school that is well led and managed. Your parents think so too.

We are writing to let you know what we liked best about your school.

- ☺ You are very well cared for and looked after.
- ☺ You learn well because teaching is good.
- ☺ The teachers and the other people who help you plan activities that really suit your individual needs well.
- ☺ We think that you learn lots about how to keep healthy. We were very impressed with how you grow fruit and vegetables and make things, like soup, for lunch.
- ☺ By the time you leave school you have made good progress learning skills that will help you in the world of work.

We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better.

- Plan more activities so that you can learn more about the different cultures of people who live in our country.
- Develop more opportunities for you to learn about what it is like to be in the world of work, outside school.

Keep smiling and having fun as you learn.

Best wishes

Nina Bee
Lead inspector