

# Derrymount School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122949
<b>Local Authority</b>	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	314437
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Thompson HMI

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
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	49
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jean Allton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kathy McIntyre
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Churchmoor Lane Arnold Nottinghamshire NG5 8HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0115 9534015
<b>Fax number</b>	0115 9534025

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school offers education for pupils with moderate learning disabilities. Pupils at the school are from a range of social and economic backgrounds and nearly all are from white British backgrounds. Just under half of the pupils have autistic spectrum disorders and around a fifth of the pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few pupils also have a hearing impairment and use British sign language. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The nature of the pupils' disabilities means that most are working well below national expectations. There are no pupils in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1. Most pupils are in Key Stage 3 and over three-quarters of the pupils are boys. There have been significant changes in the leadership and staff over the last two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Derrymount is a satisfactory school with notable strengths in the progress pupils make in their personal and social skills, which is good. Their academic progress is satisfactory overall, but mixed; some pupils progress well in particular subjects where teaching is reliably good or better. All pupils achieve some form of accreditation. In 2007 all pupils who left at the end of Key Stage 4 achieved one or more GCSEs or a vocational equivalent. The focus on accredited awards has helped to increase the commitment of pupils and raise their self-esteem. They are rightly proud of their achievements. Pupils are positive about the school, they like the staff and understand the rules. They welcome the fact that their contribution to the school community is valued and report that the school council makes a difference. Additional curricular opportunities are popular and many pupils are involved in sporting activities both within the school and other communities. Pupils have taken great interest in the music tuition available and a few pupils spoke of their excitement about residential visits. The good curriculum offers an increasing range of options to older pupils and the school works hard with other partners to match courses to the pupils' strengths and interests. The school carefully considers how girls, who are a minority within the school, can best be motivated. Over the last three years, all pupils leaving at the end of Key Stage 4 have gained a place at college and the vast majority have been successful. The success of vocational and work-based opportunities for older pupils reflects their previous hard work in developing good social skills.

Teaching across subjects and key stages is satisfactory, but assessment is not consistently and effectively used. Lesson tasks and the questions teachers ask different pupils are not always sufficiently different to ensure that pupils of all abilities progress well. Guidance on progress is satisfactory. Some teachers give pupils a clear idea about their levels of achievement but this is not consistent. Pupils are not regularly involved in deciding how well they are achieving academically or socially. Parents are pleased with the care offered at the school and all questionnaire responses reported their children's enjoyment of school. The views of many parents are illustrated by one who said her child had, 'progressed greatly in self-confidence and a willingness to try things he would normally not consider...a chance to develop as a whole person'.

The headteacher and senior team provide satisfactory leadership and management. They have a detailed knowledge of the needs of individual pupils but this information is not being analysed collectively to provide a whole-school picture. Assessment information is not systematically informing targets and planning to raise pupils' progress. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. There have been improvements in some aspects of the school's work identified for development at the last inspection; for example, improving links with parents. However, progress in the effective use of assessment across the school has been slow.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment more effectively to plan work that motivates and meets the needs of pupils with different levels of ability within all lessons.
- Involve pupils more frequently in deciding how well they are making progress both academically and socially.
- Use assessment data to establish challenging targets for pupils' progress to help raise achievement in each key stage.

- Make better use of available information to identify more precise and challenging targets for whole school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The academic progress made by pupils is satisfactory across the school. Pupils join the school in many different year groups, but most start in Key Stage 3. The vast majority of pupils enter the school at well below national expectations in literacy, and make satisfactory progress. A few pupils are working at similar standards to other pupils of the same age in mathematics and science when they join and this is usually sustained. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. There is considerable variability in progress between pupils and subjects across Key Stage 3. Progress made by pupils usually improves the longer they spend at the school, but significant dips in progress in different years and subjects are evident. Pupils' achievement last year in science, art and design subjects was good.

The school does not analyse information for different subjects, years and groups sufficiently to evaluate progress thoroughly and effectively.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The progress pupils make in these areas is a strength of the school. The structure and the opportunities on offer help pupils to make significant improvements in their personal development, particularly social skills. Many pupils have significant difficulties working with others when they join the school. The care and support offered by staff help pupils to behave well and thus establishes a calm learning environment. Pupils who previously were only able to work individually soon begin learning as part of a small group. They understand the expectations of behaviour and the procedures if they fail to meet them. Structures within the school day are effective in maintaining a calm atmosphere but do not actively encourage pupils to take on responsibility for managing their own time and behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is just satisfactory as there are few opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of cultural diversity. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the activities available including the gardening club, computer club and various sports opportunities. Lessons in personal, social and health education effectively support pupils in gaining a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Older pupils have good opportunities for work experience and this supports their development of work-based skills. The progress pupils make enables the vast majority of them to continue their education at college once they have left school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is variation in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make is closely linked to this. Staff have good relationships with pupils and

often use gentle humour to keep pupils motivated. Expectations of behaviour are clear and pupils respond well to these. The use of assessment to inform planning is developing but is not consistent. There is some good and outstanding teaching where a range of activities are carefully matched to the pupils' levels of ability. Where strong teaching was observed, pupils were involved in practical activities and questions set were at levels appropriate for individuals. Praise for the pupils' response clarified why the teacher was pleased and it was explained to pupils how the levels achieved compared with national expectations. In other lessons there is too much whole-class teaching and work is not tailored to the pupils' different levels of ability and interest. Teaching assistants are skilled but are often not deployed flexibly so that they can make the most effective contribution to the learning. Supportive strategies for communication for example, signing and symbols, are usually effective but occasionally classroom organisation makes it difficult for pupils to access them. Information and communication technology is not widely used to support learning in other subjects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school offers a good curriculum that is designed to meet a range of needs. In Key Stages 2 and 3 there is a good breadth of subjects and sufficient focus on developing basic skills that will help pupils in the next stage of education and beyond. In Key Stage 4, and for a few pupils in Key Stage 3, a more personalised approach is adopted and many pupils attend vocational and accredited courses at other schools and colleges. The links with other settings strongly support pupils' personal development. The range of accreditation on offer has increased over the last few years. Pupils are committed to completing the necessary work to achieve accreditation and a good number of pupils achieve a certificate or award. The option for early entry for awards is effective in raising pupils' motivation. The curriculum is enhanced by additional opportunities including rock climbing, residential visits and opportunities for work experience. Outside school hours there is a breakfast club and a few other clubs, but, many pupils experience difficulty attending them because of the inflexibility of transport arrangements.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff at the school are clearly committed to helping pupils make progress and they care for them well. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are suitable but recent staff changes have meant that not all training for key personnel is at the recommended level. There is due regard to health and safety issues and a suitable system for risk assessments. The strategies used to help pupils deal with their behaviour are consistent and there is careful monitoring of this approach. Staff respond to the views of pupils and their aspirations but do not involve pupils regularly enough in deciding how successful they have been as learners. The work of a dedicated link person for supporting families has helped to improve attendance. The monitoring system enables swift and effective action if attendance is declining. Close links with other professionals have helped to increase opportunities for pupils and to secure placements for their next stage in education.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are committed to school improvement. They are suitably focused on trying to meet the individual needs of pupils through a responsive curriculum and support structures. This is partially successful but is not making a good impact on overall school improvement. Effective monitoring helps to support the smooth running of the school. Evaluation is overgenerous in some areas and is not founded on a shared perception of good progress for pupils with different levels of need within the school.

Governors have a good knowledge of the needs of the pupils. They recognise their responsibilities and take an active role in the school. School improvement planning is in the early stages of having impact. Success criteria are not always related closely enough to the outcomes for pupils which makes it difficult to evaluate effectiveness objectively. The information on individual pupils is not used systematically to feed into evaluation of whole school developments. There have been some positive developments since the previous inspection but progress in using assessment and improving the quality of teaching have been slow. Target-setting has helped to maintain pupils' progress as satisfactory, but, is not based on detailed analysis of pupils' achievement, nor is it broken down in a way that provides the necessary challenge to increase progress in each key stage.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	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	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

20 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Derrymount School, Arnold, Nottinghamshire NG5 8HN

Thank you for making us welcome during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and being able to see your work. We think your school is satisfactory and gives you good support to improve your behaviour and social skills.

You behave well in school. Many of you found previous schools difficult and you were unable to make the progress you can. Derrymount has helped you to start succeeding again. This is very important for you and many of you work hard to achieve certificates and awards. You are rightly proud of these. We think the school could help you to make better progress by making more lessons like the best. We have asked staff to look carefully at what you know already and use this to plan different activities that you will find more interesting and will give each of you a good challenge in all lessons.

You enjoy school and the good range of subjects, as well as the clubs and activities that are on offer. You were keen to tell us how the school council has helped to make a difference in your school community. We are glad you are involved in some decision-making but would like you to have more opportunities for this. We have asked staff to involve you more regularly in deciding how much progress you have made in subjects and in your social skills. You can help by taking your responsibilities in this seriously.

The headteacher keeps a record of what each of you have achieved each year and we have asked her to look at this more carefully so that she can set some targets to help you and staff know how much more you can achieve. We think that, if all the information is used, the staff and governors will know how to improve the school quickly.

We wish you all the best for the future

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)