

Springfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123334
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314563
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Alley
Headteacher	Mrs Christina Niner
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	At The Bronze Barrow Cedar Drive Witney OX28 1AR
Telephone number	01993 703963
Fax number	01993 708796

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Springfield School provides for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and for a significant number of pupils with additional complex needs such as autism. The school is on two sites, which are co-located with mainstream schools. The primary site shares purpose built accommodation with the mainstream primary school. Although the schools have separate classrooms there are some shared facilities and resources. In addition, there is a fully integrated nursery which is jointly staffed from both schools. Secondary aged pupils are based in premises which are close to the primary site, but in the grounds of a secondary mainstream school. Most learners are of White British heritage. There are four times as many boys as girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Springfield is a good school. All pupils make outstanding gains in their personal development. Parents are happy for their children to attend, knowing that they will be well cared for and that the school has high expectations of their success. One parent's comment was typical: 'It is a pleasure to send our children to Springfield School.' Pupils feel secure and well supported. They learn well how to remain healthy, to keep themselves safe and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. They value the school and this is evident through the very good relationships they have with staff and the good attendance of most pupils.

Most pupils, including the minority of girls, achieve well in their studies and a few make excellent progress. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. Pupils develop outstandingly positive attitudes to learning and the confidence to tackle new work. This underpins their good achievement. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour exceptionally well and this is a significant strength of the school. The school has effectively developed its provision for pupils with autism since the previous inspection and these pupils also make good progress.

Teaching throughout the school is good. Lessons are generally interesting and well managed. The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress are excellent. As a result, teachers are able to set challenging and specific learning targets. This in turn means that they effectively tailor activities to meet the learning styles and abilities of each pupil. The effectiveness of educational support and guidance is restricted, however, because individual learning targets are sometimes not made clear enough to the pupils. As a result, they are unsure about how to improve their work.

The pupils follow a good curriculum and their learning is enriched by the many opportunities they have to interact with the community. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) are developed well. Older pupils receive good quality work related learning. Almost all Year 11 pupils, for example, who left school last year were able to extend their education on suitable college courses. There are successful and developing arrangements between the mainstream primary school and Springfield to promote the integration of pupils from both schools. Links with the secondary school are not as well developed.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior staff have made substantial improvements to their procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. As a result, they have a good overview of provision and clear plans for continuing school improvement. Assessment procedures now provide the school's leaders with accurate information on the pupils' performance. This enables them to track and analyse pupils' achievements with much more certainty than at the time of the previous report. The monitoring system however does not always respond quickly enough to changing circumstances. For instance, the data on the pupils overall achievement is reviewed only twice during the year. The governors of the school have significantly improved the quality of their strategic management. The school now monitors and evaluates its own work accurately. It is well set to build on the good progress made since the last inspection and there is a good capacity further to improve provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many of the children enter the school with levels of attainment generally well below those expected of children of this age. They make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding and outstanding progress in their personal development. Teachers and support staff know the children very well. They make good use of assessment strategies to adapt activities to meet the needs of each child. As a result, the children enjoy their work and try their best. The classrooms are calm, happy places because the children feel safe and routines are well established. For instance, staff in the Reception class clearly signify changes of activity by singing specific made up rhymes. The nursery-aged children are taught in the same room as those children from the mainstream provision. This enables the children on some occasions to work and play together. These arrangements, which are still capable of further development, are effective in developing children's social skills and attitudes to learning. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There are good procedures for children's transition into the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish consistent procedures to inform pupils how well they are doing and how to improve their work further.
- Carry out more regular monitoring of pupils' overall achievement levels so as quickly identify any pupil in need of support.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils achieve well and a few make outstanding progress in the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. The pupils make better progress when they are well informed about how to improve their work. Because of their learning difficulties, most are not able to achieve the standards expected in mainstream schools and standards are exceptionally low. However, they make good progress throughout their school career. By Year 11, all the pupils reach their potential by gaining a range of nationally accredited Unit Awards. All groups of pupils perform equally well in all subjects, whatever their needs. Pupils with additional complex needs, such as those with autistic spectrum conditions and communication difficulties, achieve well because of the good support they receive, which helps them to overcome the barriers to their learning. All the pupils make excellent progress in meeting challenging targets for their personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' excellent progress in all aspects of personal development reflects the school's strong emphasis on moral and social values. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils know what is expected from them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. This is particularly important for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions, who generally make excellent gains in their self-confidence and ability to relate to others. Pupils respond very well to the challenging personal targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). As a result, they gradually develop a clear understanding of acceptable behaviour. The pupils are very considerate, for example, to other pupils and staff. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying or intimidation at school

and one commented, 'We care for each other.' They have an outstanding commitment to the school as a community in which they all share. Their good progress in basic skills and in work related learning means that they are very well prepared for when they leave school.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and parents confirm that their children really enjoy their learning. This is reflected in the pupils' good attendance and very good attitudes to learning, both of which have a substantial impact on their achievements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and their assistants work in very effective teams and they have an excellent understanding of their pupils' learning needs. Planning for lessons is good, because teachers work from clear schemes of work. Teachers and their staff effectively record all the small steps in the progress of each individual pupil and consequently they are able to create challenging learning targets. However, they do not always fully inform their pupils about how to improve their work and this sometimes slows down the pace of learning. Individual pupils receive a high level of support when necessary. As a result, pupils become much more confident in attempting new things and this has a positive impact on their achievement. Pupils with communication difficulties and those with profound and multiple difficulties are able to take a full part in classroom activities because staff provide good visual clues and make good use of facilities to enable them to learn through sensory experiences. Pupils like their teachers and the support staff and so respond well in lessons. Pupils understand and respond well to the clear routines, and this assists in keeping a strong focus on learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good breadth and balance of learning programmes throughout the school and teachers' long term planning is effective. The pupils' enhance their learning well through a range of extra activities and there are frequent visits and events, which support the pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures and teach them that new things can be learned in a variety of situations. This adds considerably to the pupils' enjoyment of school. Those with additional difficulties are fully included in activities. Higher ability pupils in the primary department benefit from their inclusion in some lessons in the co-located mainstream school. The school is enthusiastic to develop links further, especially since integration opportunities between the secondary department and the neighbouring high school are not as well developed as in the primary department.

Programmes in personal, health, and social education (PHSE) have a significant impact on the development of pupils' personal skills. The arrangements for vocational and work related learning are good since pupils are given many opportunities to gain work experience and to follow courses which lead to nationally approved qualifications. This provides an effective bridge to further study when they leave school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are rigorous standards in child protection procedures and risk assessments and these help to ensure the school is a safe and happy place. The pupils make excellent progress in their social and moral skills because of very strong behaviour management and the excellent support from all staff members. This is an outstanding strength of the school. The high number of parents who returned questionnaires generally praised the school for its positive impact on their children's lives. The pupils with additional communication and behavioural difficulties are very well supported. As a result, over time, they make outstanding progress in their personal skills. However, teachers do not consistently do enough to make sure that pupils know how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior staff have developed strategies to help them maintain improvements in teaching and the curriculum and pupils' achievement is better as a result. Senior staff have established secure procedures to ensure that the pupils' progress is monitored and tracked, although this is not yet completed frequently enough. Communication within the school is good and the high quality of professional training is effectively linked to procedures for managing the performance of teachers and other staff. This has made a significant contribution to improving the consistency of teaching and, in turn, the pupils' good achievement. Resources are used well and the school gives good value for money. The governing body has become more effective than at the time of the previous inspection in monitoring each aspect of the school's performance. Governors now provide an increasing level of challenge and support to the school's leadership.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	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
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?	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
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

29 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springfield School, Witney, OX28 1AR

When I came to your school recently, you made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classrooms and at lunchtime. Thank you for your friendliness towards me and your excellent manners and the way you helped me with my work. It is obvious that you all enjoy being there. I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school, which does many things well. Here are a few of those things.

- The teachers encourage you to work hard and so you make good progress in your work and excellent progress in learning to behave well and look out for other people.
- You have a good range of activities which teach you about the local and other communities.
- Lessons are interesting and you are well taught. This means that you enjoy learning and do your best.
- The older students amongst you have good opportunities to learn skills which will be useful when you leave school.
- All the adults at the school look after you well.

I have asked the school to look at two things which I believe will further improve it.

- Make sure your teachers always explain clearly to you how to make your work better.
- That school managers check more often how well you are doing.

You can help too, just by going on working as hard as you have been doing and by continuing to support each other so well. Please thank your parents for their helpful comments.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector