

# Horton Lodge Community Special School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124496
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314941
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Potheary

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 special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	52
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Harris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ruth Zimmerman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Rudyard Leek ST13 8RB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01538 306214
<b>Fax number</b>	01538 306006

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Horton Lodge caters mainly for learners with physical disabilities and moderate or severe learning difficulties. A minority of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities are becoming increasingly more varied. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school specialises in Conductive Education, which is a very structured approach to increasing mobility in pupils with physical disability. A small minority of pupils board at the school for part of the week. It also offers out of hours facilities to pupils and their families including swimming, an extended day and summer school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Horton Lodge is an outstanding and vibrant school in which pupils flourish. It secures very high levels of academic and personal achievement for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils of all ages and abilities, irrespective of the nature of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This prepares them extremely well for moving on to their next school, which in many cases is a mainstream school. Conductive Education principles and a focus on supported communication integrate into every aspect of the school's work, including the outstanding residential provision. For this reason, pupils' experience regular success in learning how to move and communicate from a very early age, which gives them the confidence to want to succeed in other areas of learning. They, therefore, develop extremely positive attitudes to work and each other. Their behaviour is excellent and they become highly independent young people. Consequently, they willingly and maturely undertake duties around the school and accept responsibility for much of their own learning. The school is filled with laughter as pupils take pride in their achievements and strive successfully to do their very best. Pupils love going to school and parents recognise this. They are very appreciative of the opportunities afforded to their children. Comments like 'my little boy is making such good progress we can't believe what the staff have achieved with him' are typical of their views.

Children and pupils' personal and academic achievements are so outstanding because exceptional leadership and management have put in place provision to meet their every need. Teaching is of equally high quality throughout the school and the majority of lessons are outstanding in helping pupils to learn rapidly. Pupils do exceptionally well in communication, speaking, listening and reading. Pupils confidently discuss their views and make their wishes known, good-humouredly and often having to overcome great difficulties to do so. The excellent and exceptionally rich curriculum brings learning alive through a host of purposeful and exciting activities that are supplemented very well through work undertaken with partner schools. Thorough planning and guidance help pupils to meet very challenging targets in their work, and high quality care supports their excellent personal development and well-being. Every learner is cared for in a personalised way so that their particular needs are fully met.

The school continues to evolve very well and has built on the strongly positive findings of the previous inspection report. It is exceptionally effective in helping pupils improve even further, through very thorough self-evaluation and very well focused action planning. Leaders acknowledge that linking their development planning more closely to pupil achievement targets would strengthen their systems in responding efficiently to the changing needs of the school population. They feel that this would make the expected impact of their work clearer to all involved and help secure continued high quality improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in all the areas of learning. Attainment on entry is very low due to the nature of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some children do so well that they move from the Foundation Stage straight into mainstream primary education. Very effective teaching, coupled with a highly specialised curriculum, means that children from the age of two rapidly learn to make choices, communicate and develop their physical capabilities. This contributes significantly to their personal development, especially their confidence and joy of learning. Lively teaching and warm supportive relationships ensure that the children are totally

engaged in the various activities, which is why they learn so quickly. Superb planning, assessment and carefully crafted targets involve children very well in understanding how well they have learned and what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is very well organised to develop all the areas of learning. Frequent and very effective use is made of outdoor learning, involving activities as varied as bird watching and looking after the school's donkeys. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extensively to enhance learning. Parents are extremely appreciative of the high quality support they receive from when their children are very young.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

The residential provision was visited by Ofsted inspectors in November 2007. They concluded that the boarding facility exceeds the national minimum care standards in all respects. The minor points for improvement have been, or are being, addressed. Excellent leadership has developed a facility of the highest quality, with exemplary procedures to safeguard and care for children. Residential activities contribute significantly to children's achievement and progress and especially their personal, social and independence skills. Significantly, staff continue with conductive and communication education in the residential setting to help children increase their independence. An extensive array of activities encourages independence further. For example, the pupils go ice-skating, horse riding, and receive regular football coaching. All activities are decided in consultation with the pupils and all after school clubs are open to everyone. The residence has a homely feel and children and their parents value it enormously.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Strengthen the systems for responding efficiently to the changing learning needs of new pupils, by linking school development more explicitly to the expected impact on their progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

All pupils have significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities and so attainment on entry and standards are well below national averages. Despite this, learners show outstanding progress and achievement, especially in English, science and ICT. Pupils' reading develops rapidly and many are adept at using written symbols to record their thoughts. In one class, pupils prepared a report and several demonstrated skill levels close to those of their mainstream peers. Even the few who do not quite reach the challenging targets set in every subject, demonstrate good progress. Pupils usually excel in a wide range of subjects, including art, music, dance and sport because their confidence is high and lessons are so interesting. Progress in mathematics is consistently good, although this is the key area identified by the school for raising standards further. A high proportion of pupils eventually move on to mainstream schools and the excellent progress they make continues when they leave and is often commented upon by the receiving schools.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Learners' evident enjoyment of school leads to good attendance. As one typically commented, 'I absolutely love school.' Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and show considerable interest and respect for the lives and cultures of others. They clearly care deeply about each

other, often speaking out if they see another pupil needs something. Pupils also behave very safely and there are no recorded incidents of bullying.

The good contribution pupils make to the school and wider community includes work on community projects, raising money for charities, and sitting on the school council. The pupils' role in taking responsibilities with the running of the school is not yet outstanding because opportunities are missed to involve them more routinely. Pupils' excellent acquisition of basic skills as well as their considerable social and teamwork skills ensure that the next stage of their education and their futures get off to a flying start.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Lessons are typified by excellent, rewarding relationships that enable teachers and pupils to find the frequent successes exciting and to work together to build on what has been achieved. The considerable teamwork between teachers and supporting staff enables essential activities that develop physical and communication skills to blend seamlessly into all the learning taking place. Work is varied and thoroughly enjoyable and pupils respond by showing exceptional engagement and interest throughout the day, which is why they learn at such a rapid rate. This is true of pupils of all ages and abilities including those with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. Planning and assessment are of a very high quality and ensure that all pupils learn at the pace and in ways that suit their individual needs.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very effectively planned to help each individual learner succeed academically and personally so that all their individual needs are fully met. Activities to promote pupils' well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are carefully incorporated into all subjects. This results, for example, in an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and pupils relish the fruit they eat and willingly take part in a remarkable number of physical activities. These include regularly sailing on the local lake, and dancing with professional performers. Activities such as these provide for an exceptionally rich curriculum and the school has taken advantage of every possible opportunity and link to bring learning to life. Pupils join in with other schools on a regular basis for a very wide range of activities including sport. Several pupils benefit from learning alongside their mainstream peers for part of the week and mainstream pupils visit the school regularly. All this presents new challenges and gives the pupils opportunities to experience things that they may wish to pursue in the future.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school is a very safe place, with robust safeguarding procedures to protect pupils. Attendance has been improved, and almost all absences are now authorised. Pupils' outstanding personal and academic achievements reflect the very high levels of guidance and support that they receive. The outcomes of careful assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in key subjects, such as English and mathematics as well as ICT and personal, social and health education, are used to set challenging individual targets. These are not only used to plan lessons,

but also to decide whether extra support is needed to help individual pupils achieve them. Pupils are involved very well in this work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

School leaders successfully strive to maintain the already high quality of education and build upon the school's strengths. The school's highly valued work with mainstream schools ensures that the large number of Horton Lodge pupils who move into the mainstream do so successfully. Through very effective self-evaluation, leaders identify any areas of weakness in order to improve the academic progress and personal development of pupils. All staff are fully involved in this work. This has resulted in several improvements, including even greater progress for the increasing numbers of pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and a move from good to outstanding progress for the more able pupils in reading. There have also been several improvements to the curriculum, thus building on pupils' already good skills in ICT and in areas as diverse as performing arts and social understanding. The capacity to improve is therefore excellent.

All planned school development initiatives are based upon thorough analysis of the data and pupils' individual targets, which are challenging and highly effective. Despite the evident successes, senior leaders have recognised that making pupil progress targets more explicit in the development plan would sharpen practice in helping to secure continued success with a changing population.

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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?	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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>	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
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
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**

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school is very successful, well run and very caring. It is an outstanding school, which is just as several of you and your parents told us. It helps all of you to make excellent progress in your subjects and personal development. School leaders do an exceptionally good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. You are responsible, hard-working and behave extremely well. The way you try to be helpful and look out for each other is outstanding and you clearly enjoy coming to school. The school is exceptionally successful at keeping you safe, caring for you and supporting you to do your very best. The programmes to help you learn how to communicate and move about are of a very high quality and help you all to do so well in every way. We have asked school leaders to be much clearer about how the changes they wish to make will help you learn more. We are sure that you would help by talking to them about this and by continuing to work hard.

Very good teaching makes lessons very interesting and enjoyable because the teachers give you a variety of things to do. Your teachers and supporting staff are very skilled at helping you do so well. We love the way you take so much pleasure from all your successes.

We were pleased to see that you take plenty of exercise and eat such a healthy diet. The confident way you sign or make conversation and your increasing independence prepares you very well for your future lives. We are impressed with the way you help with the smooth running of the school, and particularly the many ways you contribute to the community.

We wish you all the very best in the future.