

# Uplands School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126555
<b>Local Authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	315585
<b>Inspection date</b>	7 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Mascall

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>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	53
6th form	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Shaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Bishop
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	The Learning Campus Tadpole Lane Swindon SN25 2NB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 707590
<b>Fax number</b>	01793 707591

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

### Description of the school

Uplands school provides for pupils with a range of special needs including severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds; there is a very small proportion for whom English is not their first language.

Since the last inspection, the school has moved into a new purpose built school based on a learning campus that includes mainstream primary and secondary schools as well as a primary special school. There have been disruptions to the senior management team in the last two years but recent appointments have resulted in a full senior leadership team.

Pupils enter school with levels of skills that are well below those expected for their age, and because of the nature of their special needs, standards are very low.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Uplands is a good school. The care and welfare of pupils is at the heart of all it does. As a result, pupils are very well cared for and they make good, and in some areas, excellent progress in their personal development. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their smiling faces as they are greeted by staff when they arrive and the cheerful, calm atmosphere throughout the school. Parents are overwhelming in their support of the school, and the excellent links with parents and external agencies are much valued by parents and do much to support pupils' care and welfare. As one parent commented, 'The partnership between my son's teachers and helpers brings the utmost respect from us as a family. Without the support of the school our son would not be the boy he is today.'

Pupils benefit from good teaching and this enables them to make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Lessons are lively and good use is made of praise to encourage and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers know their pupils well but the work in lessons is not always matched well to the wide range of special needs within each class and does not ensure more able pupils make the best possible progress. This is because although all pupils have targets planned for them these vary in quality and are not always well focused on ensuring that pupils make clear gains in their learning. Pupils talk very positively about school and like all the different activities on offer; these greatly enhance the curriculum and ensure that it is effective. There has been a good focus recently on reviewing and adapting the curriculum so that it better matches the needs of the different groups of special needs within the school. These initiatives though have not had time to show full effect yet.

The move to a new school and the disruption to the leadership team has not prevented the school from moving forward. The commitment and determination of the headteacher to provide the best for the pupils, particularly in their care and welfare, have enabled staff and pupils to settle into the new environment well. A good start has been made in analysing all the information the school has gathered about the progress of pupils. Whilst this is beginning to be used to bring about improvements, the school recognises that systems need to be refined further. At present, there is insufficient analysis of the progress of all the different groups of pupils to identify precisely where improvement is necessary. This in turn has prevented the school from ensuring that targets are sufficiently challenging. As a result, governors, whose governance is good overall, do not always have the information they need to provide sufficient challenge and ensure they have a clear understanding of the school's educational direction.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

As a result of effective leadership and good teaching, pupils in the post-16 provision make good progress. A strength of the post-16 provision is the focus on encouraging pupils to become as independent as possible. The curriculum is effective and provides very good opportunities to go to college and experience the world of work. As a result pupils develop into responsible self-assured young adults who are well prepared for life when they leave school.

Pupils like being in post-16 because they are treated as adults and are educated in a separate, discrete environment. Staff know the pupils very well and effective teaching enables pupils to gain a range of accreditation particularly in ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network). There are good opportunities for pupils to develop life skills and the

school is developing further the range of accreditation it already offers in order that pupils' success can be recognised. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good and enable pupils to have a good awareness of keeping safe and how to behave in a range of different settings. Whilst the provision for personal, social and health education is good in many respects, the school is very aware of the need to ensure it is improved further. At present, there is insufficient focus on enabling pupils to have a better understanding of relationships, emotions and sex education.

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

- 
- Refine systems for analysing information about pupils' progress so that the school can be clearer about its specific areas for development.
- Make better use of assessment data in order to set more challenging whole school targets for pupil progress.
- Improve the quality of targets set for individuals so that the needs of the pupils effectively met in lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

From very low starting points, pupils make good progress in their learning. They make good progress in their communication skills because staff make every effort to encourage them. Recent improvements have led to those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties making good progress. Those pupils with severe learning difficulties achieve as well as those with similar learning difficulties when compared nationally as do autistic spectrum disorder pupils. By the time they leave school pupils' achievements are good and they gain passes in ASDAN. A small proportion achieve Entry Level passes in mathematics, science and physical education.

The targets to help pupils make progress are not always sufficiently well focused. This has resulted in more able pupils in particular, not making the progress of which they are capable.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

One parent commented 'What is most important to me is that my son loves going to school', and the enjoyment of pupils when in lessons and at play times is very evident. This is reflected in their excellent attendance. Pupils show real pleasure when participating in activities and talk enthusiastically about the many things they like. They comment on how safe they feel in school and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They clearly get on well together and this is very evident at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are very supportive of each other and keen to help one another in and out of lessons. They take part in sport with a great deal of enthusiasm and are conscious of the need to keep fit. They are aware too of the need to eat healthily and have a sensible approach. One young man pointed out that it was alright to have a beef burger but not everyday! The school council contributes well to the life of the school and pupils across the school enjoy taking on responsibilities and being involved in all

things that go on. All of this contributes to their confidence and self-esteem and prepares them well for life when they leave school.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral and social development. They say there is no bullying and show a clear understanding of the rewards system, and what happens if they misbehave. There are good opportunities during the day for pupils to reflect and they will sit quietly, for example at the end of a lesson and think about the prayers they have written. Whilst pupils are very involved in the school and local community, their opportunities to develop an understanding of their own or other cultures are satisfactory rather than good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

A strength of teaching is the very good teamwork that exists between teachers and support staff. Support staff know pupils very well and respond effectively to their needs. There are high expectations that pupils will communicate whether through the use of voice, symbols or the use of switches. The use of signing is less evident and at times opportunities are missed to reinforce vocabulary through this medium.

Humour and praise are evident in many lessons and there is invariably a lively approach to lessons that makes them interesting and helps pupils stay on task. Information and communication technology is used well by staff and pupils. This was evident in a lesson where pupils were confidently using an interactive whiteboard to move shapes from one place to another in order to build a house. Occasionally, the focus of a lesson is not clear because teachers are not specific enough about what skills they want pupils to gain by the end of the lesson. Usually work is matched well to the needs of the pupils. This though is not consistent across the school and on occasions, inappropriately, pupils carry out the same task regardless of their ability.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

There are a number of strengths to the curriculum which ensure it is effective. For example, the many opportunities for enrichment during the day do much to support pupils' learning and enhance their enjoyment of school. Staff recognise though that the curriculum needs to be matched more closely to the different range of special needs within the school and the age range of pupils. There are examples of good practice where this has started, such as in post-16 and for ASD pupils. The exceptionally high quality accommodation contributes greatly to pupils' learning and is used well. Present planning though of the school day does not always ensure that best use is made of time. This is most evident at break and lunchtimes when some opportunities are missed to extend pupils' skills further by developing their individual skills.

The preparation for pupils' next stage of education is very good and there are extensive opportunities for work experience and to attend college. The close links with local schools are being developed further and are providing good opportunities for pupils to experience education in a range of settings.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The very rigorous systems that support pupils' health and safety ensure that the school is a safe place to be. Procedures for child protection and the vetting of staff are very rigorous and effective. The excellent links with parents and multi-agencies including a wide range of specialist staff enable the school to do all it can to ensure pupils' health needs are met and that they are well cared for. The school is meticulous in checking attendance and ensuring that pupils attend as regularly as possible. The procedures for supporting and managing behaviour are very good and this ensures that pupils behave well around the school. Staff's effective knowledge of pupils' special needs, particularly those with challenging behaviour ensures that pupils are given the right level of support and care so that they can access learning. The recording of incidents is very rigorous and action is quickly taken such as changing an activity or moving a child to another group where the school recognises a pattern of disruption.

The academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory overall. Pupils know they have targets and are involved in their annual reviews. However, the targets set vary across the school. Whilst some pupils are set academic targets, others only have targets linked to their social and behavioural needs. There are examples of detailed targets that make clear the next specific steps needed for the pupils to progress but others are vague and difficult to measure. This sometimes makes it difficult for pupils and staff to be clear about what pupils need to be doing to improve.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

This is not a school that is content with second best and the move to the new building has motivated staff to look at what they provide and improve it further. The senior leadership team are keen to move things forward at a faster pace, now that all are settled in. They are led well and are supported effectively by a committed, dedicated staff. This ensures that the school has a good capacity to improve. There is a lot of enthusiasm amongst staff, and middle managers in particular are keen to take on more responsibilities. At present, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring what goes on in their subjects and the school is looking to develop their roles further.

There have been many improvements since the last inspection. This is very evident in the big strides the school has made in making best use of the information it has on pupils' achievements. It recognises that there is more to do to enable it to be more accurate in assessing the progress of pupils. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness. It has not though used the information it has gained from analysing pupils' progress sufficiently well to enable it to set itself targets that will raise standards further. Governors are very supportive and their governance is good but they do not have enough information to enable them to challenge the school effectively to do even better.

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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	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	

### 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	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	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

<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>	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	3	
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	2	
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**

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Uplands School, Swindon, SN25 2NB

Thank you for making Allan and I so welcome and talking to us during the inspection. We especially enjoyed the discussions we had with you during the day. Your school is doing a good job and you make good progress in your learning. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know about.

?You really enjoy going to school and being involved in all the activities. ?The school is very good at making sure you are safe and well looked after. ?Your teachers try to make sure lessons are enjoyable and interesting. ?The new school building gives you lots of different opportunities and places to learn in. ?Your teachers and other staff work very closely with your parents and other adults to help you learn and look after you. ?The school is well led by the headteacher, staff and governors; they all work well together. ?You are well prepared throughout the school, especially in post-16, for when you leave school.

In order to make the school even better we have asked staff to: ?make better use of the information it has about how well you do so that it can be clear about what needs to be improved and so set itself targets that will make it even better. ?improve the targets it sets you so that teachers can make sure the work they give you is always right for you.

We hope that where you can you will help your teachers by making sure you know your targets.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall Lead inspector



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- The school is very good at making sure you are safe and well looked after.
- Your teachers try to make sure lessons are enjoyable and interesting.
- The new school building gives you lots of different opportunities and places to learn in.
- Your teachers and other staff work very closely with your parents and other adults to help you learn and look after you.
- The school is well led by the headteacher, staff and governors; they all work well together.
- You are well prepared throughout the school, especially in post-16, for when you leave school.

In order to make the school even better we have asked staff to:

- make better use of the information it has about how well you do so that it can be clear about what needs to be improved and so set itself targets that will make it even better.
- improve the targets it sets you so that teachers can make sure the work they give you is always right for you.

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Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall  
Lead inspector