

Watergate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100766
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	323340
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	81
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	1
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Handley
Headteacher	Mrs A Youd (Executive), Mr R Munro (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lushington Road Bellingham London SE6 3WG
Telephone number	020 8695 6555
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Watergate School caters for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, including an increasing number with complex needs. All have a statement of special educational needs, or are being assessed. Currently, 11 pupils have dual placements with local mainstream schools. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the most predominant being White British, Black African and Black Caribbean. English is an additional language for a very high proportion of pupils, and over twenty different languages are spoken. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in the Nursery and one of the infant classes. The school has gained the Healthy School and Activemark awards as well as curriculum and achievement awards. It is federated with Greenvale School, to which most pupils transfer at age 11. The executive headteacher is the overall leader for both schools, but each school has its own headteacher, governing body and budget. The school provides an outreach service to schools throughout the local authority. Its out-of-school provision was last inspected in April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Watergate is an outstanding school that has very high expectations of its pupils. Parents are delighted with the provision. Comments such as 'Our daughter has come on in leaps and bounds' sum up their views. The very strong leadership of the senior team has ensured that the school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. Its federation with Greenvale School has proved successful and given added impetus to developments. Teaching and learning have improved and are now outstanding; consequently, pupils' achievements have improved and are also outstanding. At the heart of the school's success is the belief that all pupils, whatever their background or ability, can achieve highly. Teachers plan lessons that are tailored carefully to individual pupils' needs. They work closely with support staff so that pupils feel safe and secure and are able to give of their best. The imaginative ways in which staff use resources, for example information and communication technology (ICT), motivate pupils and ensure that learning is fun. Meticulous assessment ensures that everyone is clear about the next small steps in pupils' learning, and all staff work tirelessly to make sure pupils achieve these.

Pupils' personal development is an extremely strong feature of the school's work. Behaviour is excellent, with many pupils showing substantial improvement in their personal and social skills since they first joined the school. This success is based on well-established systems to promote and reward their every effort. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and say they make good friends. They appreciate the calm and purposeful lessons and are extremely positive about the wide range of extra activities, such as sailing and drama, that they undertake. They develop a clear understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. There are few instances of bullying, and pupils know what they should do if any occurs. They learn to respect others with different needs as well as those from different backgrounds and beliefs. A display in the school entrance showing that 'We all smile in the same language' exemplifies this well. The school's strong links with others provide a wide range of opportunities that enable pupils to make an excellent contribution to the community. The care they receive is of very high quality, and pupils learn to trust others.

The senior team gives an extremely strong lead and provides the commitment, enthusiasm and determination to ensure that the school continually improves. It has established a climate of strong teamwork among all adults, so that everyone realises that it has an important part to play in school improvement. Staff at all levels rise to this expectation. Governors are extremely effective. They support the school in ensuring that it promotes excellent community cohesion through its very strong links with others, and that it provides outstanding value for money. The school's self-evaluation is robust, with extremely rigorous and discerning monitoring so that everyone is aware of areas most in need of improvement. Efforts are focused carefully so that best use is made not only of staff time but also their expertise. The school has improved the ways it tracks pupils' progress since the last inspection. However, there is still further to go in presenting this information so that parents, governors and other stakeholders can easily judge its overall effectiveness. To date, its track record of improvement shows that it is extremely well placed to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The school ensures that all staff working in this area have excellent skills to support young children, many of whom have very complex needs. Consequently, achievement is outstanding because of excellent teaching. The arrangements to introduce children to the school are very effective, strong links being established with each child's parents well before the children enter school. This ensures that children settle very quickly and develop the daily routines and independence that are the cornerstones for their future learning. A particular feature of the work of the EYFS is the excellent way in which staff encourage and enable children to communicate with others and interact with their environment. The leadership of the EYFS is highly effective, and careful tracking of children's progress fully meets the needs of the EYFS curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Present information about pupils' progress in such a way that parents, governors and other stakeholders, can easily judge its overall effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils of different abilities invariably reach or exceed their challenging targets. Although standards are well below those in mainstream schools, they represent excellent achievement and progress given pupils' very low starting points on entry. In all aspects of their work, pupils show great determination to succeed. This is based on confidence gained from the belief of staff that 'If at first you don't succeed, there is always an opportunity to try again'. The school's strong focus on developing pupils' skills in communication, language and literacy is highly effective and gives a firm foundation for all aspects of their learning. Recent work to challenge the most-able pupils in terms of literacy is producing some very impressive outcomes. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are extremely well supported and make progress equally good as that of their peers. The provision for pupils who are dual registered with nearby primary schools is very carefully managed, so that these pupils gain significant benefits from the extra challenge given by working alongside their mainstream peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All pupils make significant gains in developing their confidence, independence and self-discipline. The ways in which they learn to think through their actions and the effects of these on others is impressive. This ensures that all work together in a harmonious atmosphere and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils participate enthusiastically in physical activities and this is recognised by the school's Healthy School and Activemark awards. In all their activities, they pay attention to behaving safely and look after each other very well; for example when helping others who are less ambulant than themselves. Pupils' attendance is good. Although the overall rate is affected by the medical conditions of some pupils, the school makes every effort to encourage all to attend regularly. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their own community, for example through the work of the school council, who are currently involved in deciding which books to buy for the school library. They also work extremely well with the wider community in a range of activities, such as the current project with local schools

to commemorate the Holocaust. Pupils develop the skills, particularly those in literacy, numeracy and ICT, that prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school's rigorous programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has been highly effective in bringing about improvements in classroom practice since the last inspection. It informs the well-thought-out programme of staff development so that all staff gain the skills and confidence that they need in addressing the complexity of pupils' needs. This improved practice is reflected in the meticulous planning and assessment that are in place for each pupil. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and a fully consistent approach to managing behaviour, also form the bedrock of pupils' very successful learning. Teaching is particularly well enhanced by the support staff, who play an important part, especially in helping pupils to develop the confidence that they need to succeed. The school's excellent accommodation is used very effectively by staff to support pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum continues to be excellent, as at the last inspection. Its flexibility ensures that timetables are carefully matched to the needs of individual pupils. A wide range of therapies are very successfully targeted to meet pupils' personal circumstances. Access to learning in different settings, such as local mainstream schools, together with resource-based sessions and collaborative projects, such as at the Globe Theatre, all contribute significantly to pupils' motivation and enjoyment. A key focus is given to pupils' personal development and to the development of their skills in literacy and numeracy. These are very successfully integrated into all aspects of the school's work. Enrichment activities, including after-school clubs and a residential visit for Year 5, are wide ranging and play an important part in pupils' involvement in school life. The school benefits from working closely with Greenvale School on curriculum innovation, and this ensures that there is excellent continuity in provision into secondary education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements, and an exemplary level of care is given to all pupils. It starts before pupils join the school, through carefully planned family links, and continues, with strong support from the school's transition worker, into the next stage of education. The systems for supporting pupils' personal development are extremely effective and ensure that they develop the social skills needed to become successful members of the wider community. There is rigorous tracking of each pupil's academic and behavioural progress. This information is used extremely well to organise extra support for individuals, for example therapeutic support and literacy support. The way in which staff involve pupils in assessing their own learning is very effective, and fuels pupils' determination to succeed. Parents are kept very well informed about their own child's learning, and are encouraged to be partners in their child's education. The school also works very well with a wide range of outside agencies and with other schools to support pupils' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and vision of the senior team is outstanding, and has been central in ensuring that the school has improved from the very positive picture seen at the last inspection. Their energy and enthusiasm, along with the added support gained from working with its federated school, ensures that Watergate continues to improve rapidly. Governance is excellent. Governors are extremely supportive of the school. Their investment in developing the skills of staff pays dividends, and ensures that all develop the ability to work successfully with pupils with such a wide range of needs. The school is very effectively helping other schools by providing training and support in how to work with pupils with special needs. It has developed the role of its middle managers very well, and they play an active role in monitoring and developing the provision. Since the last inspection, a great deal of effort has gone into developing assessment and tracking systems, and these are used very well to ensure that pupils' achievements have improved. However, there is further to go to present this information so that others, such as parents, can easily judge how effective the school is overall.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watergate School, London, SE6 3WG

Thank you for the help that you gave me when I came to inspect Watergate. From what you told me and from what I saw, it is clearly an excellent school.

I enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. I was very pleased to be invited to a meeting of the school council, where you told me that the staff look after you extremely well. Your behaviour is excellent and I know that you like coming to school very much. You also like to keep healthy by playing games and using the school's swimming pool. You told me that the staff and your friends help you, and that you like your lessons. I could see that you make excellent progress because of the excellent teaching, and that staff make your lessons fun. All of the extra activities you do, such as sailing and going to the Globe Theatre, also make your school a great place to be.

I know that the staff have plans to make Watergate even better, and you can help them by always trying your hardest. I have asked them to make sure they use the information about how well each one of you is doing so that others, such as your parents, can easily judge how successful your school is overall.

Yours faithfully

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector