

Sherwood Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103025
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	323726
Inspection dates	17-18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	73
Sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mavis Peart
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Claire Fionda
Date of previous school inspection	3-4 May 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with governors and staff. She observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of policy documents, the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress, pupils' work, and 13 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- the governors' strategic plans and how they challenge the work of the school
- the tracking of pupils' progress
- the way that the curriculum is tailored to individual pupils' needs
- statutory safeguarding procedures.

Information about the school

Sherwood Park School admits pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties has increased since the last inspection, currently representing approximately half of the pupils. This is particularly evident among the younger pupils. There are more boys than girls and all pupils have statements of special educational needs. A small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals and a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or at an early stage of English language acquisition. There is a Foundation class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children can join this class from the age of three years and attend part-time until they reach compulsory school age. In the rest of the school, there are a few pupils who attend part-time because they are too poorly to come to school each day. Most pupils attend school until they are 19 years of age, having spent either three years in the further education (FE) class or five years in the transition class.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to safeguarding procedures.

The inspector drew the school's attention to its failure to meet all the current government requirements relating to safeguarding procedures and child protection training. Action to tackle this weakness is an urgent priority.

Sherwood Park School has many strengths and pupils achieve well. Families, staff and governors express their confidence that this is so. However, the overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate because senior staff and the governing body have not paid sufficient attention to their statutory duties over the past few years in respect of safeguarding procedures and promoting community cohesion. Although outcomes and provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for students in the sixth form are good, leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of these key stages is inadequate because of the issues regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Although these inadequacies are serious ones, there is much that goes on in classrooms throughout the school that is of good quality, and this ensures that pupils and students of all ages do well.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive from staff are good and, notwithstanding the issues surrounding safeguarding, some aspects of pastoral support are outstanding. For example, the work that the school does in partnership with families and other professionals is integral to pupils' learning and development. This not only ensures that pupils' individual medical and physical well-being are addressed very well, but also that their emotional well-being is given high priority. The effects of this are that pupils are calm, relaxed and grow in confidence. The difference that this makes to their learning is very clear. Through constantly recognising and acknowledging even the smallest responses from pupils, staff skilfully enable them to make progress. Careful recording of these responses in lessons enables staff to have a clear picture of what pupils can do and in what contexts. This information is not always used specifically enough to plan opportunities in subsequent lessons for pupils to practise and build upon these skills. Nevertheless, the recorded information is used well over time to accurately assess

pupils' attainments in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology so that senior leaders can track and evaluate pupils' rates of progress effectively. Their tracking shows that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

The school has many well-established links with the local community and the high priority given to making sure that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to apply their learning in practical situations is a strength of the curriculum. However, the school's responsibility to promote community cohesion in a wider context has not been sufficiently addressed. Staff have begun to discuss the part that they play in discharging this responsibility but this has not been debated widely enough or in sufficient depth to address all of the required elements. In addition, governors do not yet have a clear strategy to evaluate their effectiveness and plan for development in this area of their work.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve, and action to address issues raised during the inspection has already started with urgency. Senior leaders have demonstrated through the effectiveness of their work since the last inspection that they are driving the school forward and have a vision for its future. They generally evaluate their work well. For example, the deputy headteacher makes very good use of assessment data to interrogate whether or not different groups of pupils are making enough progress from one year to the next. There are also clear links between issues identified for improvement and the professional development of staff, such as training to enhance the expertise of staff in teaching the increasing proportion of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Action plans are evaluated regularly and judgements on the effectiveness of the provision are accurate and linked to the difference that they make to outcomes for pupils. However, this process is largely based on identifying the changes that have occurred rather than focusing on the anticipated success of the actions taken.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors and senior staff should ensure that all of the government's statutory requirements are met so that:
 - with immediate effect, the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks complies fully with the regulations
 - with immediate effect, the designated member of staff for child protection undertakes the required level of training
 - the effectiveness of the school's promotion of community cohesion is evaluated across religious, ethnic and socio-economic strands within local, national and global contexts.
- Improve teachers' planning and use of assessments of what pupils can do in lessons by:
 - evaluating pupils' daily or weekly progress in order to inform future lesson plans.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Lessons observed during the inspection showed that pupils of all ages pay good attention to what is required of them, according to their ability. They focus on their teachers and can answer questions or make relevant responses using a variety of communication strategies, either verbally or using signs, symbols and eye-pointing. Similarly, when working on their individual targets with other staff, pupils maintain good eye contact and listen carefully to what is being asked of them. Pupils respond well when offered choices and to opportunities to do things for themselves. It is also noticeable that pupils support one another in class by spontaneously celebrating one another's successes and by helping those who may be less mobile than themselves. Pupils talk about having friends and enjoying playing with them. Some older students were observed chatting avidly to one another in the corridors as any other teenagers would, to the extent that they had to be reminded to get to class!

Pupils feel safe, confident and calm and do not show any form of anxiety. For example, pupils with autism tolerate the close proximity of classmates and those who are particularly sensitive when touched will often let others touch them gently without becoming distressed. Pupils of all ages and abilities were seen in lessons and around the school to be actively involved with what was expected of them. Examples of good spiritual development were demonstrated in the way that pupils showed enjoyment and curiosity. For one pupil in Key Stage 1 this was shown by the pleasure of listening to music during reflection time. For a student in the FE class, this was exemplified by the seriousness with which she explained how plants in their garden were growing and being looked after.

Pupils arrive in school in the morning with enthusiasm and are keen to get to class. Some come from a night away from home because they have been at a local respite centre and others will go there at the end of the day. Pupils manage these transition times very well, happily trundling their suitcases behind them if they are able. Pupils attend school as much as they can. Although rates of attendance are average, this genuinely reflects absences for medical appointments.

Pupils occasionally attain Level 1 of the National Curriculum in aspects of their literacy or numeracy work and some go on to gain the first stages of an Entry Level qualification by the time they leave the FE class. Most other pupils are working slowly but steadily through P Level steps and for some the steps are very small. Nevertheless, this represents good progress from one key stage to the next. Through a thorough analysis of their progress, the school identified that last year pupils did not do as well in their literacy skills as in previous years. This was linked to weaknesses in the planning and delivery of the English curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

There is some variation in the quality of teaching throughout the school but, as seen during the inspection, lessons are characteristically of good quality. Teachers plan work for each term and some of this is broken down into weekly activities. This gives pupils good opportunities to consolidate their learning. Sometimes opportunities for pupils to show what they can do independently are missed because the plans are not specific enough to show how activities will extend the learning from one day or week to the next. Similarly, good opportunities for pupils, whatever their ability, to make choices are a regular feature in lessons. Opportunities for pupils to express preferences more spontaneously and to use their preferred means of communication more independently are not as well planned.

The curriculum for each key stage is planned well and gives pupils a good range of experiences as they move through each year group. This allows teachers to plan lessons effectively for the wide range of pupils' abilities in their classes. There is a strong focus on practical learning within the local community as well as in the classroom. Other trips extend pupils' social and cultural awareness, as does the range of resources in the classroom showing different cultures, as well as the teaching of Spanish. A particular strength of the curriculum lies in the planning for personal, social and health education. The subject is taught discretely but also within other subjects. This supports pupils' individual personal learning plan (PLP) targets well because it maximises opportunities to develop and generalise skills throughout the curriculum while also ensuring that particularly relevant topics are taught. In some areas of the curriculum, particularly foundation subjects, senior staff have accurately identified that there is not enough planning around the most important skills that they want pupils to acquire.

The way in which different therapy programmes, regular tube-feeding and toilet training continue seamlessly with whatever is being taught in the classroom is testament to the excellent multidisciplinary team work in the school. This not only ensures that pupils access the curriculum as planned throughout the day, maximising the opportunities for learning, but also affords great dignity and respect to them. Through strong partnerships with parents, carers and other professionals, staff know their pupils very well and work towards agreed goals according to well thought-

through strategies and risk assessments. Supporting pupils' physical well-being goes hand-in-hand with developing their academic achievements and social skills. Hence the very high-quality interaction between staff and pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There are many good things about the leadership and management of the school and there are some aspects of its work that are outstandingly effective, namely the partnerships with others to support pupils and the way that staff engage with families. These successfully ensure that pupils are not unduly disadvantaged by the difficulties that they face. Unfortunately, some wider aspects of the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers have not been given sufficient attention and this is why some aspects of the school's work are judged to be inadequate. The school has not kept up-to-date with changes to its statutory duties for promoting community cohesion and ensuring that safeguarding procedures are as good as they should be. Nevertheless, the school is in a position to put things right, not only because of its past record of improvement, but also because, having realised that they have not done enough in these areas, senior staff and governors are strongly committed to do what is needed as soon as they possibly can.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The small number of children attending the Foundation class are generally well served by the provision but inadequacies in the school with regard to safeguarding pupils mean that the overall effectiveness of this key stage is inadequate. Nevertheless, good relationships are established quickly with families, partly through the key worker system, and this helps children to settle equally quickly and quite rightly gives their parents and carers the confidence that they will do well. This sets the tone for the rest of their time at the school. The children are generally happy and relaxed, as observed at a swimming session where three of them with very complex needs were laughing, smiling and enjoying the experiences offered by a very skilled team of professionals. The outside learning area is well used and enjoyed by the children, most of whom use wheelchairs and are dependent on adults for their mobility. This use of the outdoors to encourage children to make choices and to be more independent is a current priority for development.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Sixth form

As with other areas of the school's work, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is judged inadequate because of the impact of significant weaknesses in the school's safeguarding procedures. However, provision in the FE and transition classes is very effective in meeting students' needs, particularly in relation to the curriculum, which has been enhanced well since the last inspection and is outstanding. Learning activities throughout each day are very well planned and staff are skilful in encouraging students to play their part as well as they are able. In the FE class, this means that students talk a lot about what they need to plan and do as a group in order to achieve the weekly objectives. This gives them a high degree of autonomy and responsibility. For example, in planning their meal for the end of the week they had to agree a common menu, organise the trip to the local supermarket and dig up the potatoes in the garden in good time to make sure that there were enough for everyone to share. In the transition class, students with the most profound needs receive a good balance of sensory experiences and activities within the local community. In both classes, students' work is accredited to gain relevant qualifications, including Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards.

A few students each year experience the world of work through short placements within the locality. Students in the FE class go to Carshalton College one day a week and the school also has links with Nescot College. These experiences, together with relevant nationally accredited work, help students to prepare well for the next phase in their lives. Many students have been at the school since they were very young but they are not unduly daunted by what the future holds for them. Several students

showed excitement and confidence about leaving the FE class at the end of this term. Others say that they are worried about it but are able to express this and work through their concerns so that 'it isn't so scary'.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	4

Views of parents and carers

Of the 13 families who returned the questionnaire, eight included written comments. Most speak highly of the patience and dedication shown not only to their children but to them as a family.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sherwood Park School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we asked them to record an answer against all the questions for each of their children.

The inspector received 13 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 72 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	2	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



10 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sherwood Park School, Wallington, SM6 7NP

Thank you for talking to me and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit to your school. You are very happy at school. You work very hard. Clare, Andrea, Sue and all of the adults work very hard to help you and your families.

There are some more things that the school needs to do. Next year another inspector will come to see if everything has been done.

I hope that you all have a very good summer holiday. Good luck to the FE students who are leaving school in July.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

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