

Mayfield School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103619
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323867
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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 special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	163
Sixth form	32
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shirley Buzza
Headteacher	Sian Piercy
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Heathfield Road Handsworth Birmingham B19 1HJ
Telephone number	01214 643354
Fax number	01214 644279

Age group	3–19
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mayfield School provides education for pupils with severe, complex or profound and multiple learning difficulties. In 2007, the school was awarded specialist status in cognition and learning. The school is temporarily being led by an acting headteacher while the substantive headteacher is seconded to a local primary school. The secondary departments and the sixth form of the school are due to be relocated in 2010 to new purpose-built accommodation on a campus shared with mainstream primary and secondary schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage and primary department will remain in their present location. The Surestart Lime Tree Children's Centre is privately managed on a neighbouring site. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a learning space in the children's centre and are regularly taught alongside mainstream children.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mayfield School provides a good education and successfully promotes good academic achievement and outstanding personal development. The key factor in the school's success is the strong enthusiasm and commitment among the leadership team and staff to securing a harmonious, safe and enjoyable environment in which the pupils can make rapid progress both academically and personally. Parents appreciate this good school, typically making comments such as, 'Since starting at Mayfield, my daughter has improved in many areas, with the constant encouragement of the staff during good and difficult times.'

The teaching and curriculum are good and together they bring about good achievement in most subjects. Achievement is not as strong in science as in other subjects. This has been identified by the school and prompt remedial action has been taken. Progress is good right from the very start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there is good teaching and effective teamwork. Teachers throughout the school have a good focus on making learning enjoyable, and are skilled in setting a good pace in most lessons. Sixth-form students achieve well in their accredited courses. Within this positive picture, there are a few inconsistencies across the school that hold back achievement for some pupils. Members of staff occasionally forget to give additional communication cues to pupils to aid their understanding, and individual learning targets are not always sufficiently emphasised in lessons. In parts of some lessons, especially in plenary sessions and where the groups are large, pupils sometimes lose interest, particularly when they have to wait a long time for their turn. The curriculum supports pupils' academic and personal development well through a good range of activities. It is significantly enhanced by the extensive range of lunchtime clubs and visits that are often linked to curriculum topics, including theatre groups and workshops.

A real strength of the school is in the exceptionally strong personal relationships and brilliant care, guidance and support that lead to outstanding personal development. The level of staff care for and about pupils and their families is exceptional. This enables pupils to thrive as far as their difficulties and disabilities allow. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic, work hard and try to always do their best, including those with profound or multiple learning difficulties who often smile, squeal or rock to show their enjoyment. Behaviour and relationships are exemplary, despite occasional extremely challenging behaviour by a very small number of pupils.

The acting headteacher and her senior leadership team have done well in keeping up the drive for improvement. They have seen to it that the school's specialism has yielded tangible benefits for the pupils, for example through exciting theatre and vocational skills projects. The specialism has enabled the school to forge excellent links with other schools and provided good opportunities for group work alongside mainstream pupils. The school's record of improvement to date shows that it has good potential for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The good and often imaginative teaching in the post-16 department means that students achieve well and gain good results in the accredited programmes that they follow. As a result of good leadership and management the curriculum has been appropriately adapted to the needs of the young people and there are good arrangements, particularly through Connexions, to ease their transition on to the next stage of their lives. The head of department sees to it

that the curriculum is supplemented by a number of innovative projects such as the travelling theatre group that gives students the chance to work with a range of professionals. Such experiences significantly enhance students' skills and boost their self-confidence and enjoyment. Students really enjoy the opportunities to take part in an arts residential each year, along with students from a mainstream secondary school. This has had a great beneficial impact on the social development of both groups of students. A new system for tracking students' progress has been introduced this year, but it is too early for it yet to be fully effective.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The colourful, well planned and very well resourced Early Years Foundation Stage accommodation offers children a wealth of new play, learning and sensory activities. As a result, they are settled and happily occupied. This, coupled with the strong partnership with parents enables children to develop and increase their range of skills well from their exceptionally low starting points. Children feel secure and valued because the skilled staff know how best to support and motivate them. This has an excellent impact on children's personal development, so they quickly gain confidence, enjoy known routines and are increasingly able to relate, play and learn together. They behave exceptionally well, relishing the praise they receive for trying hard. Independent choice, social skills and inclusion are enhanced well in sessions when all children, including those without learning difficulties and/or disabilities share activities. The good curriculum covers all areas of learning with well balanced teacher-led and child-initiated learning through play. Children regularly visit the local community to extend their social experience. They love using computers and sing with real gusto. Good teaching and teamwork build up children's developing social, language and number skills. Staff note and assess personal development well but individual learning targets are sometimes not specific enough. Children are nurtured exceptionally well and welfare provision is excellent, including support for families and carers. The head of the Early Years Foundation Stage department leads and manages the provision well, demonstrating a real dedication to enriching the children's life experiences.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that all classroom staff make effective use of signs, symbols and objects of reference in order to increase pupils' understanding and to help develop their communication skills.
- Ensure that teachers maintain the interest and engagement of all pupils, especially in the plenary part of lessons.
- Ensure that all teachers make effective use of pupils' specific individual targets in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' severe learning difficulties mean that when compared with national averages, standards are exceptionally low within the school. However, achievement is good in most subjects because of skilful teaching, an interesting curriculum and because the school does a very good job of getting pupils ready to learn. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress right from the start. The school's specialism in cognition and learning has played a strong part in raising achievement through the extra resources and training that the school has been able to provide. Achievement in science is slightly less strong than in other subjects, because it has been held back by the shortage of a subject specialist. The school has recognised this, and has appointed a new science teacher who is fast bringing achievement up

to the levels elsewhere. Achievement is good against individual targets for the most part. However, it is held back for some pupils when their targets are not always clearly identified in teachers' planning and therefore not always reinforced in lessons. Not all teachers are equally good at providing additional communication cues, such as signs, symbols and objects of reference, and this hampers the achievement of some pupils who require it. Students at post-16 make good progress in their accredited programmes such as the National Skills Profile and Award Scheme Development and the Accreditation Network Youth Award Scheme.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The key to the pupils' excellent personal development is the very positive atmosphere along with the caring, sensitive approach of staff. Pupils speak with strong affection about the staff who teach and look after them. As one perceptive pupil put it, 'I love the staff here; they help us so much. They are our eyes and ears.' Pupils have a good understanding about how to live a healthy life, and joyously throw themselves into the good range of physical activities and tuck into the healthy lunches available. Pupils all say that they feel very safe and that there is no bullying, intimidation or fighting. The excellent behaviour reflects the pupils' evident enjoyment of school. At a meeting with the school council, no-one could think of anything that they would like to change apart from one young man who showed great self-awareness when he said, 'I can be silly sometimes and I would like to change that.'

Attendance is satisfactory overall. A significant proportion of the pupils have severe, chronic, and occasionally life-limiting, medical conditions. This is the most frequent cause of non-attendance, and absence is very rarely because pupils do not enjoy school. As the parent of one child put it, 'My child is very ill. He often misses school but when he goes, he loves it and we feel he is being very well looked after.' Pupils develop an excellent awareness of the lives of others through the school's strong links with other schools at home and abroad, and through its good programme of educational visits to places of cultural interest. Pupils take their responsibilities within the school and local community very seriously, such as being on the school council or as members of the local Young People's Council. Pupils demonstrate their fellowship with others by the way they spontaneously offer to help younger pupils or those with physical disabilities. The pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives by the way they work harmoniously together and by their good acquisition of basic skills which stands them in good stead for the future. As one parent, typical of many who responded, put it, 'Without the help and support of Mayfield School, my son wouldn't even have a future.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

All staff relate very well to the pupils, and classroom interactions are characterised by great care and warmth. This enables the pupils, even those who are most vulnerable, to feel secure, comfortable and ready to learn. Teachers are imaginative in what they offer the pupils. A good example of this is the weekly creative morning where pupils undertake a variety of music, art, dance and drama activities in mixed-age and mixed-ability groups. Teachers make good use of new technology such as interactive whiteboards, to enhance understanding and to make learning fun. Teachers make good use of group work to match up activities with pupils' individual needs. However, when classes are brought back together at the end of the lesson, some pupils often

have to sit around a long time waiting for their turn to show their work. Teachers make good use of assessment to set realistic learning targets but they do not always emphasise the targets sufficiently within the lessons. Most staff provide additional communication cues to assist pupils' understanding but a few staff do not make enough use of signs, symbols or objects of reference where these are required.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum provides an enjoyable range of opportunities for pupils to learn about living safely and healthily, and for acquiring the skills necessary for later life. There is a good range of activities which enhance the curriculum, such as after-school clubs, Saturday clubs and residential visits. The parents are particularly pleased with the summer holiday activities that are offered. The school makes very good use of its links with schools locally and abroad to further pupils' understanding and appreciation of how different groups locally, and in the wider world live their lives. One highlight of this year has been the school's touring production of the Snow Queen which has delighted local audiences. The school enjoys good relationships with local mainstream and special schools, for example for joint group work. However, there are very few opportunities for individual pupils to attend lessons in mainstream schools, although many students say that they would like to do so. The time allocated to pupils in Years 7 to 9 to learn and experience a modern foreign language is well below what is recommended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding pastoral support and very good academic guidance to the pupils. Staff go out of their way to make sure that pupils learn in comfort and safety. There are very good arrangements to safeguard pupils and to protect them from harm, particularly if they become upset and require physical assistance. Statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met. Staff work hard to remove barriers to learning. There is excellent joint working between the school and the other services, such as health, to ensure that attendance is maintained at as high a level as possible, despite the sometimes worsening condition of the pupils. The school has a very good partnership with parents, through the school's own pastoral manager. Many parents say that, 'We are treated like family.' Parents and pupils are fully involved in annual reviews. Parents learn about daily progress through detailed home/school record books. Behaviour monitoring is thorough. Pupils receive frequent verbal feedback on how well they have done, and have a very good understanding at their own level, of what they need to do next to make progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher and the senior leadership team have successfully run the school during the secondment period of the substantive headteacher, and have brought about further good improvements during that time. This is a reflection of their enthusiasm and commitment to doing the best for the pupils. The acting headteacher has carried out a thorough audit of how well the school promotes all aspects of community cohesion. Following on from this, pupils and staff are involved in a number of exciting local, national and international projects. These include: a television programme made by pupils on recycling and community regeneration; staff

visits to Soweto and Peru; and pupils working as mentors with older people learning internet skills. The school has developed a more rigorous tracking system to improve its understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses. This has been well planned, with a phased introduction. The system is fully in place for pupils up to Year 9, although it is not yet fully operational for older pupils or for students at post-16. Self-evaluation is effective and the school makes good use of the pupil information in order to improve provision. For example, information about science progress has led to improved staffing arrangements. Monitoring procedures have been effective in ensuring that consistently good teaching and learning is the norm throughout the age range. However, the school acknowledges that there needs to be an even sharper focus to ensure that all teachers make the best use of learning targets, plenaries and additional communication cues. The school's specialist status has been led and managed most skilfully. Governors are very experienced and provide good challenge and critical friendship to the school.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
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?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2	2

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	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	3	
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 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?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mayfield School, Birmingham, B19 1HJ

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. A special thanks to those of you who came and talked to us about how much you enjoy school. Please thank your mums and dads for filling out the forms and for coming in to meet us.

This is what we found out about your school.

- Mayfield is a good school.
- You make good progress in almost all of your subjects.
- The way you behave and treat each other is excellent.
- The teachers and classroom staff do a good job in helping you learn and give you lessons that you really like.
- The school gives you lots of good, interesting things that help you grow and learn.
- The staff give excellent care and support just when you need it.
- Those who run the school do a good job and are improving things all the time.

In order to make the school even better, I have asked the school to do three things.

- Make sure the staff use signs and symbols as often as you need them.
- Make sure that you do not have to wait such a long time in lessons to have your turn at saying or showing what you have done.
- Get the teachers to make better use of your targets in lessons.

Perhaps you could help by using signs with your friends, even if you do not need to, just to remind the staff.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee Lead inspector