

# Reynalds Cross School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 104131         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Solihull       |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 323972         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 13–14 May 2009 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Jeffery Plumb  |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community special                                  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 2–19   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 90   |
| Sixth form   | 22   |
| 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  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                                 |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Diane Newton                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Jane Davenport                                     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 23 May 2006  |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                           |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                           |
| <b>School address</b>  | Kineton Green Road<br>Olton<br>Solihull<br>B92 7ER |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01217 073012                                       |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01217 076976                                       |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), autistic spectrum disorders and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). A significant number of pupils have additional medical needs. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few pupils are from families who speak English as an additional language. Almost all pupils have a statement for their special educational needs. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll. The senior leadership team is a relatively new team.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. The headteacher's vision of creating a school in which barriers to learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are removed is shared by the dedicated staff team. Effective working between education staff and health professionals promotes pupils' independence well. The majority of pupils communicate their independent choices effectively. Behaviour across the school is outstanding. This is a result of effective behaviour management which has brought about a great improvement among pupils with very challenging behaviour.

Overall, academic achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory. Progress for pupils with PMLD is slower in the upper school because teaching is less effective there. A few teachers in the school do not always make the best use of the information they have about pupils' progress to ensure that work is matched to each pupils' needs. There are, however, pockets of good and outstanding teaching and learning. A lot of work has gone into improving the curriculum and this is now good. It has a number of strong features and develops pupils' life skills well, however the impact of the recent improvements is not yet fully evident.

The senior leadership team have focused on improving pupils' communication skills and behaviour. In these important areas they have been very successful. Their tracking of pupils' academic progress and analysis of pupils' academic achievement are at an earlier stage of development. As reflective practitioners, they are working hard on putting in place the very best system to track pupils' academic progress. At present, systems are not sufficiently refined to enable the school to identify where there is evidence of underachievement for individuals or groups of pupils. This is preventing the school from setting challenging targets for all pupils.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good, as is the quality of care and support they receive. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and is improving rapidly under the new senior leadership team because of the headteacher's commitment to involve all staff in evaluating the school's performance. In a short space of time, the senior leadership team has effectively managed significant change and created a culture whereby all teachers and teaching assistants feel valued and involved in planning for improvement. There have been significant improvements in creating an open and transparent culture within the school, in therapists and education staff working together to improve pupils' communication skills and behaviour and in the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The capacity to bring about further improvement is good.

#### ■ Effectiveness of the sixth form Grade: 3

The sixth form provision is satisfactory. A recent review of the curriculum has resulted in improvements to increase students' independence and accreditation opportunities, but it is too early to evaluate its impact on raising achievement. Involvement of students in evaluating their own work and the setting of targets for improvement is beginning to accelerate their learning. Students' progress is satisfactory. Through participation in college taster courses, students are supported well in their preparation for adult life. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, but some lessons are insufficiently challenging and this slows students' learning. There is a suitable focus on work-related learning, but work experience opportunities are limited to on-school site activities. Students visit a local café and handle money to purchase a drink and a snack. They are given opportunities in class to take responsibility through being given

specific jobs to do and this enhances their life skills. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, but rapidly improving under new leadership.

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### **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

#### **Grade: 2**

There are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their achievement from a very low starting point is good. Good teaching ensures that the needs of each child are met and they make good progress. On entry, children present with very challenging behaviours and limited or no communication. Assessment of their needs is good and is used to develop an individual and detailed plan for each child. Effectively managed Early Years Foundation Stage provision ensures that children's communication improves as they access a range of pictures and switches to make their needs known. Children rapidly become less frustrated as their communication skills develop and their behaviour improves very significantly. Often children find it difficult to sit on a chair for even a few moments when they start in the class but, as a result of skilful management, they learn to sit comfortably with improved concentration for longer periods. They learn through play both indoors and outdoors. Their environment for learning is safe and secure and resources used to capture their interest are stimulating. Enjoyment in learning is clearly evident. For example, during a sensory jungle story, children giggled as they stroked the animal puppets and used switches to make animal noises. Teachers and teaching assistants have the confidence to adapt their teaching in order to follow children's interests and this accelerates their learning.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with PMLD in the upper school so as to raise their achievement.
- Ensure that assessment data is used consistently in teaching to better inform lesson planning to meet all pupils' needs and so raise their achievement.
- Refine systems for analysing the information concerning pupils' achievement, so that senior staff are able to identify any patterns or evidence of underachievement and set challenging targets to bring about improvement.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards attained are well below the national average, reflecting the complexity of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). In English, there are pockets of good achievement. Pupils with autism communicate their wants confidently, using pictures and words. As their communication develops, they become less frustrated and their behaviour improves very significantly. Effective programmes for pupils with PMLD in the lower school enable them to make good progress, through lifting their heads and pointing with their eyes to choose an object they enjoy experiencing. However, the progress of pupils with PMLD in the upper school lags behind.

An effective writing programme enables pupils with SLD to make good progress. Through mathematical activities, pupils make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of important life skills. By Year 11, pupils with SLD experience handling coins as they shop and learn to weigh out ingredients as they cook. The most able independently work out what time their favourite programme is on the television. Pupils with PMLD in the lower school, through tracking with their eyes, know that although an object disappears from their sight, it does not cease to exist. Through gaining confidence in the use of ICT, pupils access their learning with increased independence as they use a range of switches and electronic talkers to make their needs known. Effective joined-up working between therapists and teachers helps pupils gain independence in feeding and mobility. These life skills, together with pupils' achievements in communication, are seen by parents as mountainous achievements.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school, as evidenced by their smiling faces and good attendance. Overwhelmingly, their attitude to learning is good. Although some pupils with autism present with very challenging behaviours, they begin to communicate and learn to relate well with their peers and show good improvements in their behaviour. With advocacy support from adults, the pupils express their voice through a vibrant school council and effect real change, such as improvements to the large outdoor play equipment. An all-inclusive physical education programme and healthy lunches make a valuable contribution to pupils' fitness. Good support improves pupils' emotional well-being and enables them to adopt a safe lifestyle. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and make a good contribution to the community. They clearly enjoy going out on shopping trips and visiting local attractions. The school is looking to improve opportunities for work experience as these are at present limited to the school site.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

There are examples of good and outstanding teaching across the school, with activities matched to pupils' learning needs, as seen with pupils with autism in the soft play area where they excel in their communication. In such lessons, very good use is made of pictures, signing and switches to accelerate pupils' communication. Most teachers make effective use of what they know about pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding and meticulously plan to raise achievement lesson by lesson. These teachers know every little quirk of each pupil and skilfully use what they know about each pupil to successfully accelerate their learning. Relationships are excellent in these lessons and very skilful behaviour management on these occasions results in pupils making outstanding improvement in their behaviour. However, this is not consistent across the school and not all teachers use their good knowledge of pupils to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. In some lessons, although teachers record what pupils achieve, they do not make sufficient use of this information to plan for pupils' next steps of learning. Teaching in these lessons lacks challenge and on rare occasions, the lack of pace slows pupils learning. Teaching is less secure for those pupils with PMLD in the upper school because insufficient use is made of assessment in lessons to inform their next steps for learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is now well planned to ensure that pupils experience a relevant curriculum to develop their life skills. Following a robust and recent audit of the curriculum, action plans have been put in place to improve it further. For example, the school is implementing a thematic curriculum for Years 7 to 9. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes on driving up achievement. Therapy is integral to the curriculum. Speech therapists and education staff work effectively to accelerate pupils' communication skills. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are mapped across all subjects and enhance pupils' acquisition of practical skills well. Accreditation for Years 10 and 11 is suitable, and higher achieving pupils are included for a range of subjects with their peers in mainstream settings. Specific programmes benefit particular groups and develop their confidence and self-esteem. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is a particular strength. Food technology makes a valuable contribution to pupils' independence and life skills as they plan, shop, prepare and cook healthy meals on a tight budget. Enrichment activities, including residential experiences, develop pupils' social skills effectively.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

An effective partnership between education staff and health professionals ensures pupils are safely positioned, helping to remove barriers to learning for them. They have good access to a suitable range of switches and electronic talkers so that they are able to communicate choices independently. Pupils' care plans are good. Good feeding programmes develop pupils' skills in feeding as independently as possible and with dignity. Child protection procedures and risk assessments, including of pupils' behavioural and medical needs, are thorough and detailed. Tracking of pupils' improvements in behaviour and development of social skills over time is meticulous. Information from this tracking is used effectively to set challenging targets to

improve pupils' behaviour. The tracking of pupils' academic progress over time lags behind. The school is in the process of improving systems to ensure that assessment is used effectively by all staff to set challenging targets for pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

In a short space of time, the headteacher, well supported by her leadership team, has put systems in place to ensure that there is a clear direction for the school. Key to this has been the increased involvement of all staff in whole-school decision-making and planning. The self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is honest and the school has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and what needs to be improved. However, the analysis of assessment data on pupils' academic performance is not sufficiently sharp. In addition, not all staff consistently use the information they have on pupils' progress to improve achievement in their subjects. Nonetheless, where decisive action has been taken to improve the provision for pupils, there has been a positive impact. For example, the decision to bring speech therapists and teachers together for planning and working in partnership in classrooms has improved pupils' communication skills. There is a good strategy for community cohesion based on a thorough audit. Governance is satisfactory and provides good support, but is not yet sufficiently challenging the senior leadership team about pupil performance.



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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

**Overall effectiveness**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 3   | 3   |
| 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?  | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   | 2   |

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>       | 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? | 2 |  |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?                     | 2 |  |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?                          | 2 |  |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 2 |  |

**Achievement and standards**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress                           | 3 |   |

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 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 |   |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 2 |   |
| 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 | 3 |   |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 3 | 3 |
| 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 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   | 3   |
| 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  | 3   | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 3   |     |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 2   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |     |
| 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**

15 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Reynolds Cross School, Solihull B92 7ER

Inspectors enjoyed visiting your school and meeting and talking with so many of you. The enthusiasm and enjoyment you show in your learning are good. You are well cared for and the improvements you make in your communication and behaviour are very pleasing.

We judge your school to be satisfactory. Your achievement is satisfactory, as is your school's teaching. Your leadership team and dedicated teachers and teaching assistants help you to communicate what you want and need, develop independence and make good gains in confidence and self-esteem.

We have asked your teachers to do a number of things to improve the quality of education for all of you. We have asked them to make sure that all of your teachers make better use of what you can already do when they plan your lessons. We have also asked the school to help staff to fully use information about what you can do when planning new activities and courses for you. Finally, we have asked the school to pay particular attention to improving the quality of teaching which those of you with complex needs in the upper school receive.

We feel sure that you will all help your headteacher, staff and governors to make your school a better place where you learn even better than at present.

Yours faithfully

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector