

Lisburne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106170
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	324340
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	57
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	Mrs Joan Pritchard
Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Woods
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Half Moon Lane Offerton Stockport Cheshire SK2 5LB
Telephone number	0161 4835045
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small special school. It caters for pupils with a wide range of needs, including moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Most pupils are White British. A much higher than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Only a few of the pupils are girls. In November 2008 the school opened a small unit for pupils aged four to seven with significant autistic spectrum disorders. The seven children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in this unit or in a class in the main school. The unit is currently housed in a temporary building with work to create an extension to the main school due to start in autumn 2009. A relatively high number of the teachers and support staff joined the school within the last two years. The school has gained the Inclusion Quality Mark, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark, Activemark and Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lisburne is an outstanding school. Exceptional leadership and management have ensured that the many strengths identified by the previous inspection have been built on or consolidated. Developments such as establishing the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and assimilating new staff have been managed expertly. Pupils' personal development and achievement are outstanding and very many parents are delighted with the way in which their children have progressed since attending the school. Pupils themselves enjoy school enormously. They are eager to arrive and meet their friends and the staff, chatting in the playground or receiving a warm and healthy welcome at the breakfast club.

Owing to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards overall are exceptionally low when compared with those in mainstream schools. However, pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. Their achievements are often particularly striking in the speaking and listening and writing aspects of English. In recent years rigorous self-evaluation enabled leaders to identify writing as a less successful area of learning. They set about improving the situation through a variety of measures such as introducing 'creative weeks'. These superb and innovative features of the first-rate curriculum enable pupils in each class to focus on a particular text, such as 'The Tempest'. Across the school outstanding teaching, characterised by extremely high expectations, generates stimulating activities which meet the needs of all pupils. During creative weeks, teaching enables them to develop a keen appreciation of characters and plot and prompts exceptional written responses. The school's attention is now turning to achievement in reading. This is because leaders' analysis of assessment information indicates that higher attaining pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, do not always make the extremely rapid progress in reading that they do in writing.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school leaves no stone unturned in its efforts to ensure pupils are safe and this extends to helping them to play their own part. For example, as a result of consistent reminders that they must talk to an adult if they have any worries, pupils are extremely well aware of how to stay safe. The curriculum plays a significant part in developing pupils' readiness to adopt a healthy way of life. They are particularly enthusiastic about physical activity, the whole school taking part energetically in 'Wake-up, Shake-up' routines. Lunchtime and after-school clubs, often suggested by pupils, are wide-ranging but sports and dance are always very popular. Pupils take their cue from the excellence of the school's care for them and their families and its active involvement in the locality and beyond. They are always ready to help others, take on responsibilities and do all they can to play a full part in school life and that of the wider community.

The headteacher sets exacting standards for all aspects of the school's work. With very strong support from her deputy, she ensures that the staff team is constantly striving to meet the school's aim to make the most of every pupil's potential. This is achieved to a remarkable degree, for example, by matching the curriculum, teaching and support closely to pupils' particular needs. From their first days in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They leave school as self-assured young people, exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children are provided for extremely well in the main school and the unit for children with autistic spectrum disorders. They make exceptional progress, often achieving especially well in learning to communicate and in personal, social and emotional development. Outstanding teaching involves the staff teams, which often include therapists, working closely together to consistently promote these aspects of learning, for example, through the use of a picture exchange communication system. Their success has a significant impact on helping children to become increasingly independent and sociable. First-rate leadership and management by the teachers in both settings ensure that learning opportunities mirror as closely as possible those in mainstream provision. For instance, children are offered a manageable number of resources or activities from which to choose. The environments for learning are adapted carefully to meet children's needs. Indoor and outdoor areas are highly stimulating in the main school and much less distracting in the unit. Children are regularly out and about in the community, learning alongside others in a mainstream nursery or riding donkeys, for example. Extremely good attention is paid to children's welfare. Induction arrangements are sensitive and flexible and stem from excellent liaison with parents and initial settings. As a result staff have a detailed knowledge of each child's needs and work tirelessly to ensure they are safe, happy and ready to learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that higher attaining pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, make progress in reading at rates that are at least commensurate with their progress in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the end of Year 6 a very small minority of pupils reach or very occasionally exceed the expected levels in particular aspects of mathematics or science. The targets set for individual pupils are very challenging. They are frequently met and often surpassed. A small number of pupils make such good progress that they attend some lessons in mainstream schools. Older, higher attaining pupils write independently and at length because teaching ensures they have plenty of ideas to express and are guided to structure their writing. Assessment information indicates that the progress of these pupils in reading is good overall, rather than outstanding. Girls and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups make progress at the same rate as others with similar starting points. In the unit for those with autistic spectrum disorders, pupils have already progressed exceptionally well, particularly in learning to communicate. Pupils with the most complex needs make progress in very small steps or maintain their skills for as long as possible, representing equally outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils report that they like all sorts of things about the school, including using computers, doing science experiments, hard work and the playground. Attendance is outstanding with unauthorised absence below the average for mainstream primary schools. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils with challenging behaviour often make great strides in learning to control their impulses so they no longer need special arrangements to support them. Pupils say there is no name-calling

or fighting but instead, 'We are all friends together.' They consider others, for example, listening carefully when individuals are struggling to communicate. Pupils know why sweets and crisps are not allowed in school. They are all involved in tending an allotment, alongside those of other members of the local community. They greatly enjoy cooking and consuming their produce or harvesting it to sell and raise money. The school council is very active and influential. Its members interview candidates for teaching posts and have questioned the council of a secondary school to help prepare Year 6 pupils for moving on. The outstanding progress all pupils make in important skills, such as using information and communication technology (ICT) and communicating with people they do not know well combines with their personal qualities to equip them comprehensively for life beyond Lisburne.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

A wide range of detailed information is collected to demonstrate how well each pupil is learning. Teachers make full use of this when planning lessons and activities to meet each pupil's needs. To manage this, they frequently use the skills and talents of teaching assistants, for example, to deliver programmes to develop mathematical language. Teachers make sure that pupils are quite clear about what they are intended to learn and involve them in considering whether these objectives have been met, so pupils are fully aware of how they can improve their work. Staff are skilled at using questions to encourage pupils to think. They allow plenty of time for them to make their responses. These often stimulate discussions, helping pupils to rehearse what they will write about. Working relationships are excellent. Pupils have great confidence in the staff and do their best to please them, for example, by meeting the clear and very high expectations for their behaviour. Resources such as story sacks, made by members of the local community, and ICT are used to excellent effect to motivate pupils and aid their understanding. For example, animated films, written and created by pupils, bring to life topics ranging from Shakespeare to space exploration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This is a dynamic curriculum. It is constantly being refined to meet the needs of all pupils as well as possible. The outstanding success of creative weeks has been extended, with a recent science week still resonating with pupils. A wide variety of special programmes are targeted at particular groups, for example, those who would benefit from extra help with talking to others. Pupils with each different learning difficulty are catered for equally well with, for instance, highly structured programmes to help those with autistic spectrum disorders to be independent learners. The very strong and effective personal, social and health education curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning. All pupils benefit from specialist dance/drama lessons, which boost their confidence and help them to understand their own feelings and those of others. The extensive enrichment activities include outings, for example, to a mosque or a hat museum, visitors, such as police officers and varied performers and clubs, including art and craft, cooking and gardening. Literacy and numeracy are given suitably high priority. The school has identified the need to consistently timetable sessions to help all pupils to link letters and sounds in order to further accelerate their progress in reading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Many parents praise the school's work to support them. A family liaison assistant is employed to provide a wide range of practical support and parents appreciate the help given by teachers, who they frequently describe as 'approachable' and 'understanding'. Pupils too know that, 'If there's a problem, teachers will help.' Current government safeguarding requirements are met. All necessary policies are in place and applied effectively. Staff are vigilant in observing any changes in pupils' demeanour or health that might indicate a problem. They are trained in child protection procedures and an approved system for intervening when pupils pose a risk to themselves or others. Extensive partnerships with other professionals and agencies mean that expert advice and help is readily available to enhance the school's work. The arrangements to support pupils when they join or leave the school or are involved in inclusion activities are very comprehensive. Pupils are very well aware of their own targets. They help to set some of them and contribute to evaluating their progress so they know their own strengths and where they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Extremely rigorous and accurate self-evaluation forms the backbone of the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. Systems involve all leaders and provide a precise view of the school's performance. This information feeds into the highly effective planning for improvement. The success of resulting actions is weighed up critically. For example, the first science week was considered a great success but the subject leader identified pointers to improve subsequent events. The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. All pupils are included in the residential visit, those unable to stay overnight being transported home after enjoying the evening activities. Pupils are taught to respect everyone, regardless of ethnicity or circumstance and, as a result, are extremely tolerant. Community cohesion is extremely high on the school's agenda and it makes an outstanding contribution. Lisburne provides support to mainstream schools, for example, to help them assess the progress of their pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it endeavours to involve and support all parents and pupils take part in a host of community and inter-school events. Governance is good and is rapidly improving as new governors settle into their roles and become increasingly confident to play an active part in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. Governors help to ensure that resources are used extremely efficiently, enabling the school to provide outstanding value for money.

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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
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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	1
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	2
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**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my time with you. Special thanks go to the members of the school council. They gave me lots of information about the school. They helped me to decide that Lisburne is an outstanding school.

I know how much you like school and I can see why. You do so many exciting things. You feel very safe because the adults take such marvellous care of you. In return, you help other people by doing jobs and raising money for charities. You behave beautifully so everyone can enjoy learning and playing.

You make fantastic progress in your work. This is because teaching is outstanding in your school. I was amazed at some of the writing you have done and by your animated films. I have asked the school to make sure that those of you who find learning easiest, especially the older children, get on as well in reading as in writing.

Your headteacher and the staff work very hard so that your school keeps improving all the time. I send them and each one of you my very best wishes for the future.