

Hawthorns Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106277
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	324364
Inspection date	9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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)	49
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 A Platt
Headteacher	Mrs M Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Corporation Road Audenshaw Manchester Lancashire M34 5LZ
Telephone number	0161 3363389
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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 for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. A substantial minority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder. Although most pupils are of White British heritage, there are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are at the early stages of acquiring English. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are a small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school provides expertise and support to other schools in the local authority. The school holds a large number of awards including the Healthy Schools, Inclusion and Activemark awards. The school is currently preparing for its imminent move to the new Sunnyside Moss campus where it will be co-located with a mainstream primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hawthorns is an outstanding school. It has improved even further since the previous inspection when it was judged to be outstanding in every area. This is because leadership is exceptional and there is a determination to strive continuously for the very best. The school knows exactly how well it is doing and sets aspirational targets to drive improvement. These contribute significantly to its outstanding capacity to continue to improve. The exceptionally comprehensive and well organised records clearly show that the school successfully promotes excellent achievement and personal development for all the pupils. School leaders and governors work very closely together as an integral team. The school is outward looking and the inspirational headteacher makes an excellent contribution to improving education both in the local authority and on a national level.

The curriculum is excellent. There is a very carefully planned balance between teaching pupils key skills and exposing them to lively activities to enrich their understanding of the world. As a result, for example, pupils make outstanding progress in learning how to make choices to keep themselves safe and healthy. When pupils are admitted to the school, standards are very low because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, pupils in the EYFS and in Years 1 to 6 make excellent progress. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, some pupils are working at levels in the low average range for their age. This remarkable achievement is possible because teaching and learning are outstanding. The quality of teaching is monitored very carefully and there are very effective systems in place to extend teachers' skills. Excellent links with other schools give the pupils very good opportunities to practise their skills in mainstream settings.

Procedures to track how well pupils are doing are exemplary. The school makes excellent use of the detailed and comprehensive information gained from assessment to set very challenging targets for learning and personal development. These form part of the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support that the school provides. Relationships are excellent. Pupils flourish in a very happy environment where each one of them is valued and nurtured. They are very confident, know that they are achieving well and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good. Pupils are extremely enthusiastic and try very hard in lessons. Their behaviour is excellent. There is an active school council which has been closely involved in preparing pupils for the move to the Sunnyside Moss campus. Pupils make a full and highly valued contribution to the school and to the community. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to work with others from different schools and cultural backgrounds. Relationships with parents, carers and outside agencies are tremendously strong. Parents value highly the excellent education which they say their children receive. 'My child has grown in confidence, has a massive sense of belonging and enjoys every school day,' is a view that typifies that of many parents.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Since the previous inspection, the school has started to admit a small number of children during their Reception year. This relatively new provision has developed extremely well as a result of the exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher and is now outstanding. Very strong links with families help to ensure that children settle quickly and make an excellent start to learning. Teaching is outstanding. Children are assessed thoroughly

throughout the time they spend in the EYFS. This includes very good recording of their responses to the many exciting activities that make up the exceptional curriculum. For example, 'listening walks' enthuse children and promote their knowledge and understanding of the world extremely well. As most children have a significant speech and language delay, the EYFS staff work very closely with the speech and language therapists. This enables children to make excellent progress in developing their communication skills. Teachers and support staff are exceptionally skilled at promoting children's personal development. As a consequence, children develop independence, learn to make choices and make excellent progress in their social skills. This prepares them exceptionally well to be successful learners. As a result of excellent planning and organisation, pupils in Years 1 and 2 with more complex needs also access the EYFS provision. This arrangement provides strong role models for the younger children and helps them to make a seamless transition into the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

All areas for improvement are minor and are already being addressed successfully by the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school's excellent tracking systems demonstrate extremely clearly that pupils in all age groups make exceptional progress in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Information gained from assessment is analysed rigorously and compared with information gathered from similar schools. This shows that pupils make faster progress and reach higher standards than pupils in similar schools. Excellent systems are in place to monitor carefully the progress pupils make towards achieving the targets in their individual education plans. This analysis also demonstrates exceptional achievement. Because the school is so effective in continuously improving teaching, pupils' results in the national tests get better each year. When tested in Year 2, pupils are working at levels below the National Curriculum. However, by the end of Year 6 some pupils achieve National Curriculum Level 3. Bearing in mind pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities this represents really outstanding achievement. There is no difference between the achievement of boys or girls, pupils from ethnic minority groups or pupils with additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' attitudes in lessons and behaviour around the school are excellent because they respond very well to the strong systems to promote good behaviour and celebrate effort. Pupils are very courteous to adults and supportive and caring towards one another. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to take on small responsibilities, helping to prepare them for their lives beyond school. They have a real sense of the need to work together for the good of the community, for example by recycling. Pupils are prepared very well for living in a culturally diverse society. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted very well through assemblies. An excellent emphasis on personal and social education and an outstanding programme of physical education, which is delivered by a specialist teacher, ensure that pupils make exceptional progress in learning how to stay healthy and safe. Through practical cookery lessons, pupils are taught skills which will enable them to manage well in adult life. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and they are seldom absent unless they are ill.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff have an expert understanding of the pupils' particular needs. Work set is based on accurate assessment and presented at just the right level for individual pupils. Outstanding team work and very well targeted and skilled individual support ensures that all pupils are fully included in lessons and learn very well. Excellent relationships and a purposeful learning ethos are evident in all lessons and other activities. Lessons are very well planned and organised to make the best use of the time available. Because lessons always include activities which are lively and fun, pupils are very keen to learn. Teachers and support staff are extremely skilled at helping pupils to communicate using spoken language and symbols.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because of the successful way in which it promotes both excellent achievement and enjoyment. The balance between teaching important skills such as literacy and numeracy and promoting pupils' personal, social and independence skills is just right. Pupils are highly motivated by the excellent variety of enrichment activities, such as attending the camp at Yealand. The curriculum is extremely well adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils including those with additional needs such as physical disabilities. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are enabled to make choices through the sensitive and skilled use of visual symbol cards. The excellent links with partner schools result in very good opportunities for pupils to be included in mainstream settings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are very well involved in setting and reviewing their own targets for learning and behaviour. Excellent links with outside agencies, and with mainstream schools, ensure that pupils' individual needs are exceptionally well met. The school works closely with parents and provides excellent support for the parents through activities such as the 'positive parenting' courses. Pupils told the inspector that they feel very safe and well supported. They said that there is always someone to turn to if they are worried and there is never any bullying. The school meets current government safeguarding requirements. All procedures for child protection and those to ensure pupils' health and safety are securely established and regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The links between the expert and highly committed governing body and the aspirational headteacher are exceptionally strong. As a result, governors and school leaders work effectively together to achieve their goal of continuous improvement. The headteacher receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher, who is highly effective in monitoring key aspects of provision, such as the progress which pupils make towards achieving their individual targets. Effective management is promoted very well at all levels, with subject coordinators providing a strong lead in their particular areas. Systems to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's

performance are comprehensive and effective. For example, information gained from monitoring the quality of teaching is used very effectively to provide coaching for teachers. This enables them to hone their skills even further. As a result, key aspects of teaching, such as the marking of pupils' work, are consistently outstanding throughout the school. Planning to develop the school even further is excellent and the school has planned very well to ensure that the move to the new Sunnyside Moss campus is successful. The headteacher makes an exceptional contribution to improving the quality of education for pupils in Tameside and to national educational initiatives. For example, she has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the ICT training programme in which staff from across the borough are trained to use ICT to support pupils with a range of learning needs. Links such as these form part of the school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The first-rate quality of education provided by the school and its highly effective contribution to outreach work ensure that it gives 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	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**

I know that some of you find reading very difficult, so your teachers will tell you about this letter. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know what you think about your school.

Your parents think you go to an outstanding school and I agree with them.

There are many things that are really brilliant in your school. These include:

- the outstanding care, support and guidance you are given so that you feel safe, make excellent progress and know how well you are doing
- the excellent way in which the school assesses and records your progress
- your excellent attitudes and behaviour
- the exceptionally good teaching, which enables you to learn masses in lessons.

All of this is possible because the headteacher, staff and governors do a fantastic job and try their very best to make the school as good as they can for you.

I hope that the move to your lovely new school building goes very well.