

# Sunnyside School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109739
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325017
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Declan McCarthy

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
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	98
Sixth form	18
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 local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Julie Mudd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<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>	The Baulk Biggleswade SG18 0PT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01767 222662
<b>Fax number</b>	01767 222663

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Sunnyside School caters for pupils with a wide range of severe and complex difficulties. There are 53 pupils educated on the Sunnyside site, 38 pupils in four satellite classes in mainstream schools and seven pupils in a designated class within a local special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The very few part-time children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in a mixed age class alongside pupils in Years 1 to 3. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low due to the complexity and severity of their learning difficulties. Every pupil has a statement of special educational need. A below average proportion are from families who speak English as an additional language. Most pupils are drawn from east Bedfordshire, but some travel from other areas of Bedfordshire and a few travel from Hertfordshire. Transport is provided for pupils. Approximately 60% of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder and the school uses specialist approaches such as the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs) and TEACCH. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are grouped in one older class and receive an adapted curriculum. The proportion of pupils with more complex learning needs has increased significantly since the last inspection. There are plans to reorganise the school in the future as an area special school in new premises.

Since the last inspection, the school has achieved a number of awards including Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools' Award and the International Schools Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Sunnyside School provides a good education and good quality care for its pupils. The school is very popular with parents, the vast majority of whom are very pleased with the work of the school. However, a very few expressed some concerns about safeguarding and the suitability of the premises, which inspection findings did not support. The overwhelming positive views of parents are reflected in such comments as, 'My child has made good progress since coming to Sunnyside. The level of care and attention is excellent, all his needs are met and the support provided by the school makes us feel part of his education.' Good leadership and management have ensured good improvement since the last inspection with a higher proportion of good teaching, a wider range of accreditation available for older pupils and students and good academic guidance. As a result, teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress in their learning.

Given the severity and complexity of learning needs, standards are very low. Pupils, including students at post -16, make good progress towards their targets, with no variation between particular groups. Children in the EYFS make good progress towards their individual targets in communication and social interaction. However, they make satisfactory progress overall towards their early learning goals because the learning environment is not quite stimulating enough to ensure creativity and exploration in their learning and a separate curriculum policy for these children has yet to be developed. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is good provision for autism and a strong emphasis on adapting the curriculum to individual needs. However, snack time is not planned or linked clearly enough to programmes for developing independence skills, there are limited opportunities for students at Key Stage 4 to participate in practical work experience and there is no separate planning for the EYFS.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual moral social and cultural development, is good. Their attendance and enjoyment of school are excellent and their behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe in school because safeguarding procedures effectively meet government requirements with high levels of staff supervision from suitably qualified and experienced staff.

All staff have a clear drive for improvement, using self-evaluation effectively to raise achievement and improve provision. For example, the school has ensured that the lack of practical areas for learning identified at the last inspection no longer acts as a barrier to learning. Governance is good and the school works effectively in partnership with the local community. It is particularly effective in promoting knowledge and understanding of the global community through strong links with schools in other countries. The school has a good capacity to further improve.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Good provision enables students to make good progress towards their individual targets and in their accredited courses, through the EQUALS 'Moving on Scheme' and entry level certificates. Good links with local colleges enable students to integrate and participate in a wider range of courses. Their personal development is good; students are polite and courteous and their attendance and enjoyment of school are outstanding. They show high levels of maturity and responsibility in making sensible choices such as selecting suitable protective clothing to wear when working with animals on the farm. Good teaching ensures students learn effectively and enjoy their education. Snack time provides good opportunities for social development and

independent living skills, However it is not adequately planned for. Consequently, students do not always understand the purpose of this and skills are not always systematically built on. Staff provide good care for students so that they feel safe and secure. Assessment systems are good; students' progress is carefully recorded and used to individualise their learning. Leadership is good, and systematic monitoring has led to good improvement since the last inspection, with increased opportunities for accreditation.

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

### **Grade: 3**

There are very few children in the EYFS. The organisation and accommodation of the school means that they are integrated into a class of slightly older pupils, and so receive the same educational provision. This is satisfactory for these children because of the nature of provision for the whole class. Leadership is satisfactory because the EYFS provision has not yet been reviewed in the light of the latest guidance. Although welfare and educational requirements are met, the EYFS curriculum is insufficiently distinct from the main school's. While all activities clearly fall within the six required educational programmes, and support the children's progress towards the early learning goals, it is not planned as such. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff pay good attention to the uniqueness of each child. Their needs are carefully assessed and a challenging, personalised learning programme is written that concentrates appropriately on the core skills of communication, mobility and personal, social and emotional development. Although achievement in the areas of learning is satisfactory overall, the children make good progress in communication and personal, social and emotional development. However, occasionally, staff do not make the most of opportunities for learning, for example during snack time. Strong relationships between children, staff, parents and other professionals, and good school-wide systems for care, support and guidance result in the children's good personal development and well-being. However, the organisation of the learning environment does not ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to make choices from a range of stimulating activities and learning resources

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

- Take full account of the latest guidance for the EYFS, particularly in developing a separate curriculum policy and ensuring children have greater access to a more stimulating and creative learning environment in the classroom.
- Ensure that snack time is coherently planned to support independent living skills.
- Provide pupils at Key Stage 4 with access to practical work experience as part of their work related learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress overall because teaching is good. Their progress over time is good so that by the time they leave school they have gained a range of qualifications and usually enter further education. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make good progress in communication and social interaction because good use is made of signing and communication aids. Pupils in the satellite bases attached to mainstream schools make good progress particularly in personal development because there are good opportunities for social integration. Although students at post -16 make good progress in work related learning (WRL), the progress of pupils at Key Stage 4 in WRL is only satisfactory because there are insufficient opportunities for them

to participate in work experience. Senior pupils on the special school site and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) progress at the same rate as other pupils because tasks are matched to their learning needs. Children in the EYFS make only satisfactory progress overall because the environment for learning is not stimulating enough for them to develop creativity and exploration in learning. However, they make good progress towards their specific targets in communication and social interaction.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils thrive and mature well; they have good relationships with one another, staff and mainstream peers. Diversity is valued and celebrated. Pupils are very accepting of one another, which contributes well to their social and moral development and to the cohesion of the school and wider community. They learn to socialise and work in groups, their self-esteem develops as they mature and they demonstrate a range of emotions such as pride and concern for others. Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. They trust and rely upon the adults who care for them. There have been no recent exclusions and bullying is very rare. Parents confirm that pupils are enthusiastic and extremely happy to be at school. Attendance is outstanding, despite the frailty of some, and the school often exceeds the challenging targets for attendance set by the local authority. Pupils enjoy exercise, and eat and drink healthily. With support, they learn to recognise signs of stress within themselves and react appropriately. Pupils are prepared well for adult life. By the time they leave school, at post-16, they have participated in work experience and made good progress in social interaction, communication and independent living skills. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4 to engage in work experience. The good progress pupils make by the time they leave, school in their academic and personal skills, particularly independence, communication and social interaction skills, helps them take their place in, and contribute to, the wider community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school accurately evaluates teaching and learning as good. Lessons are well planned so that tasks are closely matched to individual pupils' learning needs. Good teamwork between teachers and support assistants ensures that pupils learn in a structured learning environment where challenging behaviour is managed effectively. Relationships are very good, lessons are usually brisk and lively and teachers make excellent use of resources including communication aids and the interactive whiteboards. As a result, pupils are well motivated, keen to learn and try their hardest. Very occasionally where teaching is satisfactory, insufficient attention is given to the learning needs of some pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum for pupils aged five to 16 is effectively planned to systematically build up their skills, knowledge and understanding. The school has recently improved the range of accredited courses for the older students and those in the sixth form. This prepares them well for continuing education and their future well-being. Although, work experience is not provided for the pupils in the last two years of compulsory education, they receive it in the 6th Form. As a result all

pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives by the time they leave school at post-16. The pupils in the satellite classes benefit from the Sunnyside curriculum and additional opportunities for learning and socialising alongside their mainstream peers. The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and students with PMLD very well, and is generally supported effectively by suitable resources. However, the curriculum for the EYFS is not sufficiently distinct from that provided for the older pupils. Subjects such as history, citizenship, French and personal social and health education contributes (PSHE) make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and the promotion of community cohesion. The strong global dimension is reflected in the International Schools' Award, which supports pupils' cultural development. However, classes are inconsistent in developing suitable planning for pupils' progress during snack and meal times, linked to independent living skills. Curriculum enrichment is good and a number of activities, including sport, visits and use of the community contribute effectively towards pupils' enjoyment and personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school rightly prides itself on the care, support and guidance given to pupils. All required safeguarding and health and safety procedures are in place. Staff show great consideration for pupils' well-being and strive to help them enjoy lessons and have equal opportunities for learning. Occasionally, however, children in the EYFS are not given enough opportunity to explore, play or initiate activities independently. The recent focus on supporting pupils' communication and sensory needs in order to improve behaviour and their ability to take part in lessons has been very effective. The school works well in partnership with other professionals, and additional therapists and a specialist teacher have been employed to support these recent developments. Staff now have a set of simple symbols and pictures with them at all times to help communication with non-verbal pupils. Many pupils benefit from the physical activity provided by daily 'sensory circuits' which help calm them and prepare them for more effective learning. Individual behaviour plans outline very helpful strategies to guide staff in managing pupils' challenging behaviour. The impact of these measures is seen in the pupils' positive attitudes and the calm atmosphere. Academic guidance is good and has improved since the last inspection. The school has worked hard at improving the quality and relevance of individual education plans (IEPs). Most now contain suitable, challenging targets for improvement in pupils' personal skills. The IEPs are complemented by sharply focused academic targets set for each pupil in every lesson. These derive from the school's effective system for assessing and tracking pupils' developing skills in each subject, and underpin their good progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership of the headteacher with good support from the deputy head and senior leadership team have ensured good improvement since the last inspection. Staff and governors share a drive for continuous improvement. They use self-evaluation effectively to improve pupils' progress and provision, although this is not always recorded accurately enough in the school's self-evaluation form. Middle leaders and subject co-ordinators are also providing good support overall, resulting in good improvement in assessment and the wide range of accreditation on offer. Governors visit the school regularly, provide good support for staff and monitor the school's work effectively. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion by

individualising learning, through strong links with neighbouring schools, very good partnership with parents, good involvement in the community and through good links with schools from other countries. The school makes good use of its resources and provides good 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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### 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>	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?	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>	3	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
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?	3	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3	

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
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	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	2
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	2	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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>	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	
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	
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 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sunnyside School, Biggleswade, SG18 0PT

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school. We enjoyed our visit and seeing how much you like your school and the good progress you are making.

These are some of the good things we learned about your school.

Your attendance and enjoyment of school are excellent. Staff take good care of you and ensure you stay safe in school. You are all making good progress towards your targets and the oldest pupils and students make good progress in gaining qualifications. Those of you who find learning very difficult make equally good progress in lessons as other pupils because staff really help you to communicate. There are good opportunities for some of you to be included in mainstream schools. The school is good at helping you to learn about your own community, this country and other countries, such as Uganda. Ms Mudd, the staff and governors manage your school well to make sure it continues to improve.

Here are a few things to help your school improve even more:

- Make sure that the youngest children in the school have a more exciting and interesting learning area where they can explore things for themselves.
- Plan snack time to help you to learn to become more independent when you leave school.
- Provide practical experience of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Declan McCarthy

Lead inspector