

Springwell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111785
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	325460
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Colquhoun

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	76
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 Elizabeth Barraclough
Headteacher	Mr Karl Telfer
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wiltshire Way Hartlepool TS26 0TB
Telephone number	01429 280600
Fax number	01429 230717

Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Springwell School is a primary day special school which serves the whole Borough of Hartlepool. The school provides for pupils with moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, for those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Pupils are admitted between the ages of two and 11. At the time of the inspection there were nine pupils under the age of seven who are taught in two classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Currently, a small minority attend part time. Numbers in the school have increased significantly in recent years. There are an increased number of pupils who are placed on the roll of Springwell and in a mainstream school. All pupils have statements of special educational need and very few are from a minority ethnic background. No pupils have English as an additional language.

The school has gained numerous awards including, Healthy Schools Award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Springwell is a good and continually improving school. Three aspects of its work are outstanding, namely the high quality of care and support that pupils receive, pupils' personal development and the school's partnership with parents and other agencies. Parents know their children are well taken care of, and they are overwhelmingly positive about the school. A typical comment is that 'Springwell is a brilliant school ... with fantastic staff and a quality headteacher'.

The school provides well for pupils with a wide range of needs, ensuring that all make good progress; some make outstanding progress. It has recently begun to cater for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Many of these pupils have experienced difficulties at previous schools but they settle well at Springwell and make outstanding progress. They catch up in their learning and reach the level expected for their age. This is a real success for the school.

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear, shared vision for the school to be a supportive and purposeful environment which aims for excellence for all. This vision is ably demonstrated in several recent developments, including the excellent refined assessment procedures. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress across the school is extremely thorough and rigorous giving staff an accurate overview of how well each pupil is doing and what they need to do next. The school is open and inclusive. It has managed well the changes required for the increased numbers of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. These include additional resources and training for staff. The school works very well with families, and there are excellent links with mainstream schools within the local community. There are excellent partnerships with a range of specialist support agencies.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. There have been no exclusions. Parents repeatedly commented on how much their children enjoy school: for example, 'My child enjoys – well I should say loves – school... every day he comes home really happy.' As a result, attendance is excellent, with virtually no unauthorised absence. This is particularly impressive when compared with the poor attendance records of some pupils before they joined the school.

Pupils do well because the quality of teaching is good overall, and outstanding in some areas. In the best lessons, teachers' detailed planning ensures that activities are well matched to pupils' needs and support staff know exactly what they need to do to provide effective support to each individual pupil. Sometimes, the planning is less effective with the result that pupils' individual needs are not met as well as they should be, particularly in classes where there is a wide range of need. The use of verbal and signed guidance for individual pupils is very good, and pupils gain a great deal of satisfaction from the high levels of positive feedback from staff. However, teachers' marking of pupils' written work, though regular and conscientious, is not always specific enough to help pupils know what to do next to improve.

The good curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities which are generally matched well to pupils' individual needs both within and outside of school. There is a wide range of residential visits and after school clubs which are well attended. The school plans very well for the promotion of community cohesion with the school and local community. However, there is too little opportunity for pupils to learn about other cultures both in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start at school their skills and abilities are very limited. A wide range of staff from different agencies, work very well together to support every child. These include health workers and carers from residential care homes. Overall, they provide exceptional care and support which ensures the children make good progress in their social development. The arrangements for the welfare of the children are excellent and the requirements are met. The gains in children's confidence and independence are much helped by the staff's diligent adherence to daily routines. Children are happy, and feel safe and secure. They enjoy the activities which are often matched closely to individuals' specific needs. A typical example was when pupils enjoyed the visual stimulus of a bubble tube changing colour. This personalised provision ensures that the children's learning and development are good and that they meet their challenging personal targets.

The good provision is well managed. The staff understand how young children learn and place strong emphasis on helping them to get on with others. Children make good progress in all six areas of learning given their very low starting points. This is because of the good one-to-one support and carefully planned experiences that meet each child's needs. Effective systems ensure that the children's progress is carefully tracked, reviewed and shared with parents. A good feature is the full involvement of parents in their children's progress through home school books, annual reviews, end of term reports and informal events such as coffee mornings. Parents appreciate and value this highly.

Teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding. In one session, each child was working on the theme of the seashore with the activities personalised for each individual child. Some were activating switches to hear the sounds of the sea. While others were feeling sand on their toes or tasting chips. The staff work collaboratively and have a high degree of expertise in fostering children's learning through adult led and child selected activities indoors and out. The sensory garden provides a particularly rich opportunity for children to investigate and explore. In some lessons, however, there is too little opportunity for children to choose their own activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure lesson planning consistently takes into account the learning needs of individual pupils.
- Ensure the school's marking scheme is used consistently and effectively across the school.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' attainment is generally well below that expected in mainstream schools, as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In relation to their starting points, pupils' progress is good and in some areas it is outstanding. This good progress is seen in all sections of the school population. Those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make outstanding progress. Many of these pupils entered Springwell with standards well below the expected level for their age. In the national tests and teacher assessments this year, many of these pupils in Year 6 have reached the level expected for their age and some have done even better.

All pupils are set challenging targets across the curriculum, which many meet and some exceed. Most pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and in their acquisition of communication skills. This has a clear impact on their good overall achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding social, moral and spiritual development is very well supported in all aspects of school life. Pupils take an active part in assembly. For example, pupils told their version of the story of Little Red Riding Hood in which they explored moral and social issues of kindness and marriage. They sing together, and say and sign the short school prayer. However, they do not have enough opportunities to experience and learn about other cultures. As a result pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was judged to be good rather than outstanding.

Pupils say that they feel very safe at school and know who to go to if they have a concern. Pupils are keen to take part in physical education lessons. Some were thrilled to play football and to be coached by staff from Hartlepool United football club, through the football in the community scheme. The pupils clearly enjoyed the experience and worked very effectively in teams. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles. They recommend healthy food choices from the range on offer in the dining hall at lunchtime and choose fruit as a daily snack. Participation is good in the many after school sports clubs. As well as acquiring some of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy, pupils are acquiring life skills and by the time they leave school they are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school; the teachers are skilled in working with pupils who have learning difficulties and have quickly developed highly effective strategies to ensure that they also meet well the needs of pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs. For example, the use of a whole school rewards system, to promote good behaviour. Common strengths are the good team work between teachers and other adults and the ready use of praise and reward.

In the best lessons, very good planning ensures that activities are well matched to pupils' needs and that all staff know exactly what they should do to support each pupil's learning and care most effectively. Tasks are interesting and enjoyable, and related to pupils' previous experience and learning. Pupils have many opportunities to choose to learn actively and to collaborate with others. As a result, in these lessons pupils make outstanding progress.

Sometimes, planning does not match the needs of every pupil, especially in classes where pupils have a wide range of different needs. In these lessons, there can be too much teacher direction and not enough opportunities for pupils to participate and to be supported well. As a result, progress can be more variable, and although there is some outstanding progress it is more generally good.

The excellent relationships and high quality of personal support provided by all staff consistently support a positive and purposeful atmosphere in class. Detailed, clear assessment procedures provide very high quality information about individual pupils' progress supported by a wealth of photographic and other evidence. This enables staff to match the learning closely to the

interest and needs of the pupils. However, marking of pupils' written work is variable. It is completed regularly and conscientiously. However, it does not always make clear to pupils, in ways they can understand, how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and improving. It is well planned to give pupils purposeful and interesting learning activities; it takes into account pupils' very differing needs well. A strength of the curriculum is the extensive programme of visits and residential trips, which support pupils' personal development very well. The arrangements and range of venues, including Holy Island, Durham, London and Centre Parks, ensure that all pupils regardless of learning difficulty and/or disability can take part. Similarly, there are opportunities for all in the range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Some of these are shared with pupils from mainstream schools. These activities contribute positively to pupils' social development. Together with the emphasis on personal development, the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their lives. The curriculum successfully enables pupils to develop basic skills in communicating, reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The school promotes inclusion well through dual placements and the many opportunities pupils have to work with others.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding. The day-to-day procedures, supervision of pupils and attention to their personal needs includes exemplary practices, such as strict supervision of the administration of medication. Necessary procedures, for instance, the clearing of tracheotomy tubes, are carried out carefully and in a supportive environment so that neither the pupil concerned nor others nearby are distressed.

Child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures meet requirements. Staff know learners very well as individuals and establish trusting relationships with them. Parents comment very positively on this aspect of school. Many responses indicated the staff's supportive, caring and friendly attitude is 'second to none'.

The school works very well with outside agencies and the very good partnerships have an excellent impact on the very high quality of care the pupils receive.

Academic guidance is generally good. Pupils receive daily feedback through positive encouragement and praise, and their progression through activities is carefully monitored. Simple, but appropriate techniques such as 'thumbs up' are used to convey success. In some classes, the use of picture exchange and signing is used to communicate with pupils. Staff use this to good effect in guiding pupils in their work and what they are going to do next. The staff use what they know about each pupil's progress to set challenging targets which are shared with parents and reviewed termly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team is highly effective in creating an open and positive ethos where each pupil matters. The school is particularly good at supporting the whole family, not simply the pupil. This is reflected in many comments from parents, who typically say that the school 'looks after the concerns of any child or parent ... it has helped me and the boys a lot and I thank them for it'. As a result, there is strong support for the school.

The school works very actively with a range of partners in the local community. The links with a local football club, through the football in the community scheme, have been particularly successful. This active engagement with families and the community not only promotes community cohesion well but also develops pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the governors and headteacher have a very clear vision for the school's continuing improvement. This is exemplified in the recent development of high quality whole school assessment procedures, which are linked to rigorous definitions of what constitutes satisfactory, good or outstanding progress. Similarly, the school made good plans, including whole school training and recruitment of specialist staff, to meet the needs of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. As a result, the change to the school population has been seamless.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate in that governors, headteacher and staff have identified correctly areas of strength. However, the school has too positive a view of pupils' progress overall. Governance is good. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, and support and challenge leadership appropriately. Middle managers have used the information from monitoring to promote training for staff which has improved the quality of teaching and learning. This is one reason why the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
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	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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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**

2 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springwell School, Hartlepool, TS26 0TB

Not long ago I visited your school to see how you are getting on. You made me feel very welcome and I enjoyed visiting you in the classroom and joining you in assembly. This is what I found out about your school.

Springwell is a good school with some outstanding features.

- Everyone at the school looks after you very well.
- You work hard and are making good progress.
- You have good teachers who know exactly how well each of you is doing. This helps them to prepare interesting work for you.
- The senior staff run your school well and all the others, including your parents, help them to give you the best.
- You do lots of activities to help you become independent, make your own choices and learn how to behave very well.

There are three things I have asked the governors, headteacher and teachers to do to make things even better:

- to plan your learning more carefully so that you make even better improvement
- to mark your work so that you know what you have to do to improve
- to give you more opportunities to learn about the ways other people live.

You can help, too, just by working as hard as you have been doing. Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Yours faithfully

Elaine Colquhoun

Lead inspector