

Doubletrees School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112085
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325523
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Goodchild

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
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	87
Sixth form	16
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	Penny Spencer
Headteacher	Kim Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Blazey Gate St Blazey Par PL24 2DS
Telephone number	01726 812757
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) and those pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) who also have severe learning needs. Some pupils have severe medical conditions, physical disabilities and sensory difficulties. Since the previous inspection, there has been an increase in the number of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), some of whom have been excluded from their mainstream schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision caters for pupils who are admitted to the school between the ages of two and five. Most pupils join the school at this stage but several are admitted in Year 7, having been in mainstream primary schools prior to this. Residential provision is available for respite care for 43 pupils from Monday to Thursday and part of the school holidays. A new senior leadership team has recently been appointed due to the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Doubletrees is a satisfactory school. It describes itself as having a strong team spirit and that was evident throughout the inspection. Pupils benefit from a high standard of care, and their personal development is good. The school has successfully addressed the need, identified in the previous inspection, to standardise the way that pupils' progress is assessed using P and National Curriculum levels. It is now in a position to set realistic targets and use assessment information more effectively to measure the progress that pupils make in their learning. The school is well led by the headteacher, supported by the new senior leadership team. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and it is aware of what needs to be done to ensure that it continues to improve in the future. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work but managers at all levels are not sufficiently involved in the process. As a result, there is a lack of rigour in the checks made to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils. There is an inconsistency in the use of assessment information and this affects how well different groups of pupils achieve. For autistic spectrum disorder pupils, those in the Early Years Foundation, Key Stage 1 and the sixth form, assessment arrangements are good and pupils show good progress compared with their starting points. However, across the rest of the school, there are inconsistencies in the way that pupils' progress is checked. This affects the early identification of those who are not making sufficient progress so the school can provide carefully planned support to assist their learning.

Throughout the school, there is some lively teaching that engages pupils' attention and actively involves them in their learning. However, assessment information is not consistently used to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This is because staff focus particularly well on developing their personal, social, language and communication skills and their progress is systematically tracked. Sixth form students benefit from a well-planned curriculum and college links. This, together with high quality teaching, ensures that students' achievement is good. Throughout the school, there is good provision for pupils' personal development and they enjoy many enrichment opportunities. The out-of-hours clubs are particularly successful and well attended by pupils. The curriculum has been adapted well to meet the needs of autistic spectrum disorder pupils and they make good progress in their learning. However, the lack of systematic analysis of performance data does not ensure the curriculum always fully meets the differing needs of all pupils.

There is a strong sense of community in the school. Pupils confidently express their views about what could be improved through the school council. Independence is encouraged and pupils are keen to accept roles of responsibility. Relationships and behaviour are good and pupils say they enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their good attendance and the good social relationships they build. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and they are supportive of each other, both in lessons and in the playground. Adults provide high levels of care to ensure pupils' health and well-being. Pupils participate with great enthusiasm in a range of activities that promote healthy lifestyles.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students are happy and get on well together. Relationships with staff are supportive and students are willing to discuss any areas of concern with them. Teaching is of a high quality

and teaching assistants are deployed well to support students with their learning. Assessment is regular, consistent and successfully underpins teaching. Students' concentration levels are good and they stay focused on their tasks. They are able to reflect on the progress they are making in their learning with the aid of prompts, such as photographs, as appropriate. Students are clear about what steps to take to improve their work and take great pride in their achievements. They make good progress in their learning and personal development. The curriculum is effective in supporting the development of life skills that prepares students well for life beyond school. Students gain a range of accreditations and there are good links with a local college of further education. However, links with other colleges and providers need to be developed to further extend learning opportunities. The community is used well as a resource to support students' personal and physical development through use of the sports and fitness centres and the opportunities for work experience. They make a good contribution to the community through taking on responsibility for weekly maintenance of a local cycle and walking trail. Some students have gained the Junior Sports Leader Award and work with local primary schools. Good links with further education colleges and other providers ensure that transition arrangements are good and students are appropriately involved in the choice of their future placements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with attainment that is significantly below that expected for their age, particularly in their personal and emotional development and communication skills. Good initial assessments, combined with observations over the first half term, give staff an accurate picture of what children can do. Careful tracking of their progress, in both Nursery and Reception classes, against the Early Years and Foundation Stage profile ensures that learning opportunities are well matched to their needs. As a result, children make good progress in their learning. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to encourage children towards activities that focus on areas that need further development. However, the school has recognised the need to further develop their observation skills and the contribution that they make to assessing children's progress. There is a strong focus on developing children's communication skills using a wide range of strategies such as 'circle time', which successfully supports their language development. There was evident enjoyment at the end of the day when children took part in a singing activity. Those who were unable to sing participated, with the help of teaching assistants, by shaking small bells attached to their wrists in time to the music. The outdoor classroom is used to its full potential to support all areas of learning. Effective planning gives children a varied diet of stimulating activities across all areas of learning. Children are encouraged to make their own choices and develop their independence. Good leadership and management ensure that the enthusiastic team of staff are continually reviewing and improving the quality of learning for the children. Good partnerships with parents and carers and effective induction arrangements help children to feel happy and secure and to settle quickly into school.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Make more frequent checks on pupils' progress and use the information to ensure that all groups are doing equally well.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides continuity and progression in learning for all pupils.

- Develop the skills of staff with subject responsibilities in monitoring the planning and delivery of their subjects across the school.

A small proportion of schools whose 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 are exceptionally low because of pupils' learning difficulties but their achievements overall are satisfactory. However, there is a variation in the achievements of different groups of pupils. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and the sixth form make good progress in their learning and personal development in relation to their starting points. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder do well but those with profound multiple learning disabilities do not always make the progress that they should. The school has recognised this and strategies are being put in place to raise their attainment. To cope with the wide range of ability in each year, literacy groups have been set up across Key Stages 2 and 3 so that more challenging work is provided for the most able pupils. Though pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, the lack of regular checks on their progress in relation to National Curriculum and P levels does not allow for the early identification of individuals or groups who are not making the expected progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a harmonious community in which all pupils feel a strong sense of belonging. Pupils feel they are treated as individuals and their views are respected and taken into account by the school. They enjoy coming to school and feel confident that help is there when they need it. Behaviour and relationships within the school are good. The school council provides pupils with the opportunity to express their views and take responsibility for the school community. They raise funds regularly for charities. The good enrichment activities, such as the after-school clubs, football matches with other schools, visits to a local fitness centre and taking part in the National Disabled Athletics Championships, ensure that pupils have an excellent awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle. These activities are much valued and appreciated by pupils and help them to develop confidence and social skills in a variety of situations. Older pupils benefit from work experience and studying at a local further education college. All of these experiences prepare pupils well for their future lives. Visitors such as Buddhist monks, and links with a special school in Kenya, give pupils the opportunity to begin to appreciate different cultures and lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Across the school, most teachers know their pupils well, manage behaviour effectively and develop constructive relationships. Good use of communication strategies in several classes supports pupils' learning well. The quality of planning to ensure lessons meet the learning needs of pupils varies across the school. It is good in the Early Years Foundation stage, Key Stage 1 and the sixth form. This is not the case in the rest of the school, where lack of regular

assessments of pupils' progress means that learning intentions are not always adapted to meet their particular needs. Teaching assistants are very effective in the work they do and often take a lead role in running group activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Provision for personal, social and health education is a key strength across the school and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' positive attitudes, relationships and good behaviour. Pupils greatly enjoy the wide range of educational visits, visitors and clubs that enrich the curriculum. The out-of-hours clubs provide a range of additional activities, such as dance and computer clubs, that are valued by pupils and their parents. There are opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to take part in work experience, attend college courses and gain additional accreditations. Improvements to the accommodation since the previous inspection have improved facilities for autistic spectrum disorder pupils significantly and this contributes towards the good progress they are now making. However, subject leaders do not monitor curriculum planning rigorously enough to ensure that it provides continuity and progression for all groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and welfare of pupils is of a high standard. Safeguarding procedures are secure and there are rigorous arrangements in relation to health and safety. Parents are clearly delighted with the support and care their children receive. Links with parents are good and there are regular newsletters and workshops to help parents support their child. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' medical and personal needs and have the relevant training and skills to meet them. The recent development of a children's clinical centre within the school is leading to improved communication between medical and teaching staff to help better meet the needs of pupils. Provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and those with behavioural and emotional difficulties is good. With the help of specialist teaching and the support of therapists, many are now able to participate in lessons alongside their peers. The crisis centre provides effectively for the times when these pupils have difficulty coping in class. Behaviour management provision and procedures are good and the school has successfully retained in education pupils who have failed elsewhere. The arrangements for induction and transition planning are good. Students are involved in the review process, supported by the appropriate careers advice, are increasingly choosing their own future options after school. Whilst the support for pupils' welfare is particularly effective, the lack of systematic tracking of their progress affects their ability to recognise what they have achieved and to understand the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school. She is well supported by the recently appointed, but relatively inexperienced, senior leadership team. Members of the team are enthusiastic and committed to moving the school forward. The headteacher has been well supported by the local authority through the period of staff changes. Self-evaluation is accurate and strategic planning identifies the appropriate areas for improvement. It has been recognised, for example, that a system of regular tracking of pupils' progress needs to be introduced and that the monitoring of the school's performance by all managers needs further development.

Two new management roles are being created to oversee the development of these areas. The capacity of the school improve further is satisfactory. The school has a clear policy and procedures for promoting community cohesion through practical and meaningful involvement in national and global projects. Governors are supportive of the school and ensure that it meets statutory requirements. However, they do not always ask sufficiently challenging questions about the school's performance.

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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	16-19
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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?	3	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	3	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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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**

6 February 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Doubletrees School, St Blazey PL24 2DS

We really enjoyed coming to your school, talking to you and watching you work hard in lessons. Thank you for making us so welcome and telling us what you really enjoy about your school. We feel that Doubletrees is a satisfactory school with good features. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. Staff are supportive of you and you feel able to talk to them if you have any concerns. You particularly enjoy the extra activities that the school provides, such as visits, the out- of-hours clubs and taking part in sporting activities with other schools. You take your responsibilities seriously and this helps to make sure that the day-to-day running of the school is smooth.

The key things we found out about your school are that your personal development and behaviour are good and that you benefit from a high standard of care. The teaching you receive and the progress you make are satisfactory. You do particularly well in some year groups where teaching is well planned to meet your needs. You are given good guidance to help you make appropriate decisions about your future lives when you leave school. We were pleased to see that you attend school regularly.

We have asked your school to do three things to make your learning even better.

- Check the progress you are making in your learning on a more regular basis to make sure that you all do equally well.
- Ensure that the experiences you are given build on what you already know and can do.
- Develop the skills of staff with subject responsibilities in checking how well their subject is doing across the school

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully

Judith Goodchild Lead Inspector