

Hare Law School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114340
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325994
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	101
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	Alderman Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Maggie Collins
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Catchgate Annfield Plain Stanley County Durham DH9 8DT
Telephone number	01207 234547
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Age group	4–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides primarily for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorders. A few have more severe or complex difficulties, including a growing number who exhibit challenging behaviour. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Many pupils come from homes facing greater than average social and economic deprivation. Boys outnumber girls by more than two to one. There are very few pupils under the age of eight. Over the past five years only one pupil has been admitted into the Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All pupils are White British.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It enjoys the considerable support of parents. They report that their children are happy, safe and making the progress expected of them. In conversation with the inspector, pupils reflect these views. The promotion of personal development and well-being is a strength of the school, helped greatly by outstanding pastoral care and good support and guidance.

Satisfactory leadership, management and governance have resulted in improvements being made since the last inspection, especially in extending pupils' use of information and communication technology across the whole of the good curriculum. The leadership of most subjects has improved, bringing with it the capacity for further improvement in the future. Improvement is not yet rapid enough, as there is not enough good or better teaching and too much remains satisfactory. The best teaching involves pupils actively in their learning but weaker teaching is often characterised by the setting of mundane tasks where the pupils are passive learners. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that standards are well below those expected of pupils in mainstream schools but, taking into account all factors, achievement is satisfactory. It is better in English than in science or mathematics because the teaching of English is stronger.

Although pupils' personal development is good overall, attendance is satisfactory. Most absence is for legitimate reasons, but some Year 11 students are poor attenders. Behaviour is good. Lessons are very rarely disrupted and there is a settled atmosphere around the school. This helps pupils to feel safe and adds considerably to their enjoyment of school life. Pupils are regularly consulted about what they feel they can do to improve the community of the school and feel fully involved in the process. Their good personal development contributes enormously to their prospects for the future.

The good curriculum meets all requirements and is very well enriched by numerous opportunities for pupils to carry on learning out of the classroom, either on educational or social visits, or when visitors come into school to share their interests and skills. Some of these visitors play an important part in broadening the cultural and multicultural horizons of pupils. A good range of accredited courses is offered to older pupils, allowing them to have their progress officially recognised. It is very rare for any pupil to leave without having gained a qualification and many go on to continue their studies in other settings. A strength of the school is the depth of understanding of pupils' circumstances shared by all staff. These give staff valuable insights into the barriers pupils face in their learning and personal development and contribute enormously to the excellent care extended to pupils. A growing amount of perceptive and accurate assessment data are increasingly helping the school to monitor pupils' progress and to offer them good support and guidance but the use of these data by different teachers is inconsistent.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

It is very rare for any children to be admitted into the Early Years Foundation Stage. There has been only one in more than five years. Nevertheless, the school has created an environment to meet the learning and development requirements of children of this age and also their welfare requirements. Reports submitted for both annual and interim reviews show that children

make satisfactory progress in their learning and development from a very low starting point. There is a legitimate concern that any pupil admitted to the provision has no other children of his or her own age to mix with, further exacerbated by the fact that there is only one other child in school in Key Stage 1. This has been resolved by the creation of a good link with a mainstream school so a child can spend up to a half of each week in a more appropriate setting. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching, especially in science and mathematics by paying more attention to encouraging pupils to become active, rather than passive learners.
- Improve attendance, especially in Year 11.
- Ensure that all teachers make the best possible use of assessment data when setting individual targets and planning lessons.

A small proportion of the 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

The nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that standards are well below those found in mainstream schools. Despite these circumstances, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are frequently admitted at times other than is usual and often part way through their school lives when education in other settings is proving problematic. Attainment on entry is variable but nearly always low; for younger pupils, it is nearly always very low. From this point, pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This progress is slightly better in Key Stages 3 and 4, which account for over three-quarters of all pupils, than it is in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is mainly because the teaching of the older group of pupils is stronger. By the time they leave most pupils are able to gain Entry Level qualifications in English and mathematics. A further mark of the progress made by pupils is that in recent years there has been an increasing number who choose to stay in full-time education or transfer to training settings. Art is the only subject in which a GCSE course is offered but last year this enabled over half of the pupils to leave school with a formal qualification.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal well-being are good. Many gain a good sense of success and fulfilment through the recognition by staff of their efforts and achievements. These are widely celebrated through displays of their best work around the school and regular commendations in assemblies. Pupils are sociable, friendly and enjoy coming to school. Individuals of all ages mix freely and happily and learn the value of helping one another. They gain a good understanding of moral values and try very hard to be good for the sake of being good rather than being rewarded for it. These all contribute to pupils having better prospects on leaving school than might have been predicted when they joined. Behaviour is good. There are still instances when the school has to resort to short periods of exclusion as an ultimate sanction, but the frequency of these has fallen this year. Most pupils attend well but the habitual absence of a few older pupils means that the school will not meet its attendance target this year. Much of this absence is ingrained from previous schools. Pupils

participate wholeheartedly in physical education and eat and drink sensibly, all pointers to their good understanding of the importance of leading healthy lives. Their sensible behaviour demonstrates their understanding of what they can do to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils are proud of the things they have done to improve the school community, for instance their initiative to make the dining room less formal and the work they do in the school grounds to improve the environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is not enough teaching that is truly inspiring and there is too much that is mundane. Nevertheless the proportion of teachers who are teaching good lessons is growing while the incidence of weaker teaching is diminishing. The evidence of inspection also points to this being the case. During the inspection, some inspirational teaching was seen in English, when pupils were reviewing a film they are making about a book they are reading. This sequence of activities involved them totally, bringing to life what could otherwise have been a dry experience. In a weaker lesson, pupils merely completed a sequence of mathematics worksheets. Most teachers share good, supportive and encouraging relationships with pupils but there is a difference in the way they capitalise on these. Better teaching is characterised by teachers who encourage conversation and use it to stimulate and motivate pupils while weaker teaching is characterised by those whose style of teaching promotes in pupils little enthusiasm for learning as they are not sufficiently involved in their learning. Classroom assistants usually offer invaluable help to teachers and pupils but there are times when they are not deployed to best effect for parts of lessons. In most lessons, teachers take care to check that what they have taught has been learned but this is not always the case, for example when teachers do not allow enough time at the end of a lesson to do this. The planning of lessons is of variable quality. When it is good, teachers make good reference to the increasing amount and quality of assessment data they have to hand; it is weaker when planning focuses too much on teaching and insufficiently on what pupils will learn. Teachers make good use of computers and other forms of technology to help pupils in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets all requirements and is well enriched. Primary-age pupils are taught in a setting as in a mainstream school by a class teacher, while secondary-age pupils are taught more usually on a subject basis by a range of specialist teachers. There is a sensible and judicious interchange between these approaches. This supports potentially vulnerable older pupils who are not quite ready for the change to work with different teachers. There is a good distinction in provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with moderate learning difficulties. The difficulties that many of the former have in adjusting to different settings and teachers are well recognised and accommodated. Personal, social and health education is given a high priority. Good, discrete provision is complemented by the recognition that different subjects can contribute to this aspect of pupils' lives. Older pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop an awareness of what their options are on reaching leaving age and this has contributed significantly to the success of the school in encouraging growing numbers to stay in education or training after they leave.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are kept safe and well protected. Safeguarding procedures are rigorously applied; potential risk in any situation is carefully checked and the health and safety of pupils and staff assumes a high priority. The school works very effectively with a wide range of other agencies and professionals concerned in the care of pupils. It also maintains good, much appreciated lines of communication with parents. Staff show a huge awareness of the problems facing pupils and their families and are very sensitive in dealing with moments of crisis. Since the last inspection, the checking of pupils' progress has improved and the school now has an increasing amount of information about how well pupils are progressing. This is used increasingly effectively by managers to set suitably challenging targets for the school but to varying degrees by teachers when planning their lessons. Overall, the care, guidance and support of pupils are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory as teaching and learning remain satisfactory. Parents are fully supportive, they feel the school is well led and managed and are very happy with the way the school keeps in touch with them about how well their children are getting on. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and plans to bring about future improvement are good. Initiatives to improve teaching, while being successful in most respects, have not succeeded in eradicating the most stubborn areas of weakness in subject leadership. This weakens the overall effectiveness of leadership and management. Many good links have been forged with local schools and colleges. These have helped pupils to access opportunities that would otherwise not have been available to them, such as the personal development needs of an Early Years Foundation Stage child. The school plays an important part in generating community understanding of the problems its pupils face and the ways in which, despite these, they can contribute to the community. The school is mindful of the fact that most pupils' experiences of cultures or societies other than their own are minimal. Its contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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?	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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
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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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
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**

16 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hare Law School, Durham, DH9 8DT

Thank you for making me welcome when I inspected your school the other day. A special thanks to those of you who spared a bit of time to talk to me about life in school and how you were getting on.

Your school is satisfactory overall, but has quite a few good features. One of these is your good personal development. In this you are helped considerably by adults who make sure that you are kept safe and happy. All in all, you are well cared for, guided and supported. Most of you seem thoroughly to enjoy coming to school and attend well but I have asked the school to encourage some older pupils to attend more regularly. You all behave well most of the time and this helps create the settled atmosphere I witnessed on my visit. Satisfactory teaching is helping you to make satisfactory progress in lessons but I have also asked the school to help you achieve more by helping teachers to enable you to become more involved in lessons. I noticed a big difference in how hard you work when activities in class involve and interest you compared with when activities are less stimulating.

It is good to see teachers making use of all the information they gather about the progress you are making when they are planning work for you. I have asked the school to ensure that all teachers use this information when setting you targets and planning their lessons so work is not too easy or too hard.

I felt that Hare Law School has improved since the last time it was inspected and thanks to the effective work of the people who run it, it should be able to keep improving, especially if you carry on working hard.

Good luck for the future. Good luck to those of you who are entered for examinations this term.

Yours faithfully

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector