

Wolverdene Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116635
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326420
Inspection date	21 October 2008
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Veronica Crowley

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Fender
Headteacher	Mr Chris Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2005
School address	22 Love Lane Andover SP10 2AF
Telephone number	01264 362350
Fax number	01264 396600

Age group	7-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and a Care Inspector. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and boarding provision. The Additional inspector investigated the following issues.

- Achievement.
- Teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management.

Evidence was gained from lesson observations, from discussion with leaders and children and from evaluation of a range of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. Apart from care, guidance and support, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its own self-evaluation were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report. The Care Inspector spent time in the boarding provision on the day before the Additional Inspector arrived as well as being there on the day the Additional Inspector was present.

Description of the school

Wolverdene is one of only two primary special schools in the county catering for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BSED). Many also have associated difficulties such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech and language delay, and general or specific learning difficulties. All have statements of special educational need and the majority have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. The school also has weekly boarding provision for up to ten boys. The headteacher is responsible for both care and education in the school.

There are generally very few girls attending the school. Currently, almost half of the pupils are in Year 6 and there are very few in Years 1 to 3. Six pupils are looked after by the local authority. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a high turnover of pupils throughout the year as some arrive at different times and others are reintegrated into either mainstream school or other special schools.

The school has an outreach service to support other schools with regard to BESD issues. It has Healthy Schools status and is a lead school in a Department for International Development Global School Partnership linking four Hampshire primary schools with four schools in Uganda. It is also an active member of the Andover extended schools' partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Although the school provides an acceptable standard of education, its overall effectiveness is inadequate because systems for safeguarding children do not meet current Government requirements. Significant improvement is required in relation to the application of safeguarding procedures as part of the staff recruitment process.

The school provides a safe and caring environment in which the pupils flourish and rekindle their interest in education. Pupils say they feel safe in school and trust the adults around them, feeling confident in sharing their problems should they feel the need to do so. However, the systems for ensuring pupils are safeguarded fully are inadequate and constitute a serious breach of legal requirements. Inspectors drew the school's attention to its failure to meet all the current Government requirements relating to safeguarding. Action to tackle this weakness is an urgent priority. The headteacher and governors are now fully aware of their responsibilities in this area and have already begun to take action to put this right.

In all other respects, Wolverdene is a good school. Pupils are appreciative of the education they receive and the extra activities provided for them. Parents too are supportive of the school. One, expressing the sentiments of many others, commented, 'My child has improved so much after coming to Wolverdene. He is happier, feels safe, can interact with other children and is supported so well. The school is supportive towards parents as well.'

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Many have had a negative experience of education before arriving at the school. However, because of the individual support they receive, pupils improve their self-esteem and independence and learn to interact positively with one another and the adults they work with. Their attendance improves in comparison to that in their previous mainstream schools. This successfully rekindles their interest in, and enjoyment of, education. In an English lesson, the 'Crocodile' class pupils worked enthusiastically when identifying nouns and verbs from a painting by Georges Seurat displayed on the interactive whiteboard. Behaviour, which for some can be difficult when they join the school, improves considerably and is good overall.

Achievement is good. Pupils' standards on entry are well below what is expected for their ages. Some are working at 'P' levels - levels that are below the standard National Curriculum levels in schools. However, the progress they make in relation to their starting points is good. Though standards remain well below average at the end of Year 6 compared to the national benchmark, some reach the National Curriculum levels expected for their ages.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure that the work is suitably pitched to challenge the full range of capabilities in their classes. In a small group English lesson, 'Peacocks' pupils were enabled to improve their spelling of words such as 'cup', 'jug' and 'drum' as a result of the teacher's good focus on phonetics. Strong working relationships with learning support assistants (LSAs) underpin the quality of learning.

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of the pupils, enables them to achieve academic success and contributes significantly to their personal development. There is an impressive range of enrichment activities both within the school and off-site that broaden

pupils' curriculum experience. Boarders also benefit from a wide range of extra activities throughout the year.

The school's judgement that care, guidance and support are outstanding cannot be sustained because of the inadequate arrangements for safeguarding children in certain areas. Nevertheless, it is highly successful in supporting each individual in very specific ways. All, including the most vulnerable, benefit from a supportive, healthy and caring environment. Though the school has started to track carefully the progress pupils make, it does not analyse or use this data effectively enough to inform future strategies.

Although the school is well led in many areas of its work, leadership and management overall are inadequate. This is because safeguarding procedures do not meet Government requirements in certain significant areas. Further, some of the systems for recording incidents of restraint and placement of pupils in the 'time out' room lack rigour, although the school had identified this issue and was in the process of putting it right. The governing body is supportive and has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, governance overall is inadequate because governors have failed to discharge their statutory duties in relation to certain safeguarding procedures.

The school has tackled successfully the issues for improvement from the last inspection. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the headteacher, in post now for over a year, has a clear sense of purpose and direction for the school. Planning for improvement keeps the school focused on ensuring pupils' progress continues to improve. The school is now more outward looking as a result of its partnership arrangements with local schools. Despite the significant weaknesses in checking and implementing certain safeguarding procedures, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 4

The quality of the boarding provision at 'The Lodge' is inadequate, owing to one particular shortfall. The shortfall relates specifically to the recruitment process and the management monitoring of this process, which is executed and overseen by the main school. However, in all other aspects the boarding provision at 'The Lodge' continues to maintain an exceptionally high standard of individualised care in a group setting. All four recommendations raised at the last care inspection carried out in November 2007, which related to safeguarding issues, have been fully addressed.

There are clear and very effective referral procedures in place which identify individual children's needs. Well-organised health care plans, underpinned by applicable policies, ensure children's health and well-being are promoted. Children's health is further enhanced by the school's commitment to healthy eating and the provision of nutritious and varied meals. Mealtimes are well managed social occasions where the staff and children discuss the day's events. There is also a wide range of physical activities arranged for after school. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum covers the subject of healthy lifestyles and this is fully supported in practice by the residential staff.

There are clear systems in place which aim to protect children, and ensure appropriate responses are made in safeguarding areas, such as child protection, bullying and fire. Appropriate procedures are in place to respond to children who abscond from the school. There have been no incidents of absconding. Children are safeguarded by staff who are trained in positive physical intervention techniques. This enables a consistent and effective approach to behaviour

management. The open culture of the school promotes opportunities for children to voice concerns and feel listened to. Four of the seven children spoken with stated how happy they are at the school and that they 'loved the Lodge'. Communication and collaboration across care and education settings is extremely good and children receive excellent levels of individual support across both disciplines.

Children benefit from extremely well written and concise care plan packages which set out how the school will meet their assessed needs. These include individual placement plans, behaviour management plans, social plans, and action plans to address specific areas of need including those related to health. Termly reviews of the placement take place, which include the views and opinions of the children and their parents. These ensure that the placement continues to adequately meet the children's needs. Each child who boards at 'The Lodge' has a key worker who liaises with teaching staff, family and outside agencies to ensure that all plans are implemented successfully. Regular, valued contact with parents ensures children's welfare is enhanced, their progress shared and their achievements celebrated. The ongoing 'Positive Parenting Programme' undertaken by residential staff is proving very successful in supporting individual children to maintain stability in their lives. Children's welfare is further promoted through the individual therapy they receive from the school's resident therapist who works extremely effectively in partnership with the residential staff. There is also a social worker attached to the school. Comprehensive procedures are in place, which ensure that transitions are well planned and support children in their move to a new placement. This includes any outreach support required.

'The Lodge' is a very child centred residential provision. There are many rooms which are utilised well, including three different play rooms, a large comfortable lounge and separate dining room. There are an abundance of playthings, educational toys, books, play stations and a pool table, all of which are much enjoyed by the children. Children benefit from spacious, appropriately furnished and well decorated sleeping accommodation. They are supported and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and the communal areas. Many examples of their art and craft work and personal photographs are displayed which further enhance the ethos of the provision.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty to meet the needs of the boarders. The extensive arrangements in place for managing, supervising and training staff ensure best possible outcomes for boarders. A committed senior team in the boarding provision, who ably demonstrate leadership skills, oversee the staff and their continued development.

Governors of the school play a very active role at 'The Lodge'. They are involved in evening activities and taking meals with the boarding children in addition to carrying out the monitoring role on behalf of the school. Monitoring of relevant documentation held at 'The Lodge' is well managed. Monitoring of recruitment records held at the school is not being carried out fully in accordance with current Government requirements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the school complies fully with current Government requirements for safeguarding and that all recruitment procedures are in accordance with the National Minimum Standards (NMS 27).
- Ensure whole school management systems promote the health, safety and well-being of all children.
- Sharpen the analysis and use of academic data to inform future planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Though standards overall are well below average, pupils make good progress in developing the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). This eases their successful transition to the next stage of their education. At the end of the last school year, two-thirds of pupils transferred to mainstream or special provision for learning needs, whilst the others moved to special provision for BESD. However, the school has identified the need to develop further pupils' writing skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy physical activities and understand the importance of taking part. At morning break, for example, an informal game of football was played in a friendly and sporting manner. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding and are celebrated throughout the building with excellent quality displays of their work and activities in which they have been involved. They take an active part in the life of the school through involvement in the school council, local community projects and raising money for a range of charities. Because of the link programme with Uganda, pupils' awareness of the wider world is raised particularly well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A calm and purposeful approach by both teachers and LSAs ensures classes are well managed. Teachers use good quality ICT resources to enliven learning, improve motivation and develop pupils' own competencies and confidence in the use of ICT. Pupils enjoy their lessons; one commented, 'We get help if we struggle.' However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is effective because there is a focus on developing learning and positive behaviour throughout the whole day. It is, however, too early to judge the impact of the new communication and language policy to enhance language in the curriculum. Nevertheless, pupils are enabled to make good progress towards their academic and personal targets. This ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Overall, the care, guidance and support for pupils are inadequate because of the poor arrangements for safeguarding pupils in certain areas. There are good links and partnerships with others to support pupils' well-being, develop their personal qualities and enable them to make good progress. The commitment of all staff in working with pupils underpins this aspect of the school's provision. The progress pupils make towards their academic and personal targets

is recorded. The impact of this is limited though, because there is insufficient analysis and use of this information to set targets for pupils and inform future strategies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management overall are inadequate because of the unacceptable arrangements for safeguarding pupils in certain areas. Leadership is however ensuring the school continues to meet its aim of providing good quality primary education for all pupils, as well as improving the progress they make. However, the recording of the few incidents of misbehaviour and its consequences lacks rigour, although the school has recognised this and is taking steps to put it right. Resources are used effectively and there is a high commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all. The school contributes well to community cohesion. The governing body is effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend of the school.

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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?	4
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 effectiveness of boarding provision	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	2
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	2

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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
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	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Wolverdene Special School, Andover, SP10 2AF

My colleague and I visited your school over a two-day period. I spent one day there, seeing you in lessons and in other activities. I also chatted to some of you. My colleague visited some of you in 'The Lodge' the day before I arrived. She chatted to you and the staff, as well as joining some of you for your evening meal. We were both impressed by the friendly way you greeted us and the open way in which you chatted with us. We were also pleased to hear how you enjoy the extra activities you can join in, and the support you receive. We also know that your parents are very pleased with the progress you make. These are some of the things that we found are good about your school:

- during your time there you make good progress in your learning and personal development
- all the adults who work with you make sure you are safe and well cared for
- all the adults who work with you are really dedicated, have your best interests at heart and want to make sure you do well in the future
- teachers make sure lessons are well planned and interesting
- the curriculum and other activities make your education very interesting.

However, we think your school needs some extra help. We have decided that it needs something called a 'Notice to Improve'. Although there are many good things about your school, the headteacher and governors must make sure that they follow all the Government rules that apply to how schools should look after children. We think they can do this very quickly and that they will soon have all their paperwork in order. This means there is nothing for you or your parents to worry about.

We have also asked the school to make a couple of other improvements:

- make sure it improves the recording of incidents where you may not behave well
- make better use of the information it has on the progress you are making.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden

Lead Inspector