

Watling View School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117683
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326663
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	89
Sixth form	19
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	Mr Bernard Bell
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Ison-Jacques
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Watling View St. Albans Hertfordshire AL1 2NU
Telephone number	01727 850560
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Watling View is a school for children and young people with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A number of learners also have sensory and physical disabilities. Thirty percent of learners have autistic spectrum disorders. All of the learners have a statement of special educational need. A small proportion of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of learners eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school serves the St Albans area although a number of learners travel from further away. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision, and a sixth form, which is in a separate but adjacent building. The school has achieved Healthy School status and is pursuing specialist school status. It is part of the Extended Schools programme and is the lead school for a Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where learners are being helped to communicate effectively using signs and symbols as well as language. The school has improved dramatically in recent years and learners now make excellent progress in their studies as well as in their personal development. The consistent routines and high quality behaviour management strategies used have reduced stress levels for learners and enabled them to concentrate on their work. Achievement is outstanding, learners really enjoy their work and achieve challenging targets. However, attainment remains well below the national average because of the nature of the learners' difficulties and disabilities. Behaviour is good and learners, on the whole, show each other kindness and consideration. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is a very caring and inclusive community where learners feel safe and secure. Staff are committed and dedicated. Parents echo this view. They are overwhelmingly positive in their support of the school and many comment about the excellent level of care their children receive. As one parent remarked, 'The school should be highly commended for all their commitment and dedication towards the pupils....the children always seem so happy and enthusiastic'.

The headteacher leads and manages the school extremely well and she is well supported by a very strong deputy. Together they have created a happy and hard working school with high expectations where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. The roles of other senior and middle managers in monitoring and setting targets for different aspects of the school's work are less well developed, but the senior and middle management teams have recently been re-organised and they are ready to take on more whole school responsibility. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding across the school and is reflected in the rapid progress learners make. The quality of the curriculum is good and meets the needs of all. Learners are taught kindness and tolerance, and racial harmony is promoted very well. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. A home school liaison team works well to help parents support their children's achievement. There are extensive and mutually beneficial links with local schools and local businesses.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Learners make rapid progress in the sixth form in developing skills for independent living. For example, many of them learn to travel on their own within the local community. Each learner has a personal timetable and the curriculum is timetabled to meet individual needs. All learners have an impressive interactive individual education plan, which records their progress. Learners work in small groups to think about their future lives in terms of college courses, employment, housing needs and relationships and set targets to help them realise their ambitions. The Moving On curriculum, which they follow, is an externally accredited course and has involved an excellent range of activities, such as college placements and work experience placements. Learners participate in Young Enterprise and develop successful business skills selling the products they make. Excellent links with external partners, such as local businesses and the Connexions service enhance the experience of learners. The leadership and management of the sixth form are highly effective in treating learners as young adults and enabling them to progress to the next stage of their education.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management mean that children make rapid progress across all six areas of learning while they are in the EYFS, moving up one or more P Levels. This is because imaginative teaching and the use of stimulating resources and activities are planned that allow all children to have access to them. The consistent use of alternative ways of communicating such as signing, symbols and switches, all help communication so that by the time they leave the EYFS they are able to make choices. The use of a music therapist working with the children has had a positive effect on the development of early social and communication skills, particularly for those with autism. This has further developed their ability to take turns and co-operate with others. The high staffing ratio of well-led, intuitive and knowledgeable staff means that children are well prepared to continue their learning in the main school. There is a calm focussed ethos within the class and the use of a skilled teacher in working with some of the children with profound and multiple learning difficulties further enhances the learning opportunities for all. The EYFS manager has led on developing the curriculum so that the early learning goals have been adapted for children with severe learning difficulties.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that roles and responsibilities of the senior and middle leadership teams are clear and that managers have the time and resources to implement their roles successfully across all key stages.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Data gathered by the school over the past four years using the nationally recognised levels of learning (P levels) shows that learners make outstanding progress in the EYFS, through the primary phase, the first half of secondary education and in the sixth form in developing communication and social skills. This judgement is supported by evidence seen in lessons during the inspection. Progress for learners in Years 10 and 11 is good but is limited by the severity of the difficulties and disabilities the learners experience. Learners make faster progress in mathematics across the school, and science in the primary school, than they do in English. One-to-one reading sessions recently set up have had a positive impact in boosting the levels of reading across the school and the progress of learners who are emergent readers has improved greatly. The school analyses the results of different groups of learners over time and the data shows that there are no significant differences in performance between groups, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds or boys and girls. However, last year learners with hearing impairments were identified as not progressing as well as others and the school has taken action to resolve this issue by appointing a specialist trainer to check that hearing aids are working before the start of lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Learners' social development is outstanding because of the excellent relationships between adults and children and those with their peers. Staff provide very good role models so that learners appreciate each other's differences and celebrate their achievements. Learners greet one another enthusiastically and show empathy with one another. Their understanding of

different cultures is promoted through working in a local mainstream school with a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as through assemblies celebrating different faiths and the religious education curriculum. Home-school books are used to establish each learner's well-being and readiness to begin the day. Learners contribute to their community, as well as they are able, by participating in the school council and raising money for charity. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school because staff know and understand learners well. Staff take great care in ascertaining why learners may be behaving in a certain way so that the cause can be addressed rather than just dealing with the behaviour itself. Learners' behaviour is recorded and there has been a significant decrease in staff injuries due to challenging behaviour. This is due to the deployment of a specialist 'Intervener' who is able to give time out of the classroom to allow distressed learners to calm down. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because of stringent monitoring by the headteacher. It is adversely affected by learners' medical conditions. The school has achieved the Healthy School status and this has had a positive impact on choices made at lunchtime so that learners usually opt for the healthier option, and packed lunches are also healthier.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers manage behaviour extremely well, defusing difficult situations and avoiding confrontation through positive reinforcement and very effective use of praise and encouragement. This approach gives learners clear expectations for both behaviour and learning. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed extremely well with the minimum amount of disruption for other learners. Attitudes to learning are mostly good because staff are enthusiastic and lessons are well planned, appropriate resources are prepared and all learners are able to participate in activities. Learners clearly enjoy their lessons and, with support, are enabled to be as independent as possible. Even one of the youngest learners in Year 1 is beginning to work independently. Teaching assistants provide skilled support for learning. Teachers use a wide range of communication techniques in order to involve all the pupils in their class. Learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties are particularly well included and are helped by a variety of techniques to take part in the lesson. For example, in a design and technology lesson in Years 4 and 5, all learners were actively engaged in making clay Christmas models. The pace was good, learners experienced team work and the teacher used information and communication technology (ICT) imaginatively to reinforce learning outcomes. Very occasionally in lessons the tasks set do not match the abilities of the learners and the pace of the lesson is too slow. Assessment and recording of learners' progress is accurate and on-going.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of learners. The introduction of a curriculum for learners with profound and multiple difficulties has given teachers greater confidence in teaching these learners. It has helped staff plan activities and experiences that all learners can access. The new Key Stage 3 curriculum has enthused teachers, especially in English where the schemes of work are now more detailed. Whole school cross-curricular themed weeks are held, which enable learners to explore moral issues and learn about the different experiences of people around the world. Awareness of global responsibilities is promoted well through raising money for charity, a fair trade week in the upper school, European awareness through the

teaching of French, and French and Spanish days for younger learners. Support from the additional reading teacher is excellent, enabling learners to make significant progress both in their reading and in understanding of language. There is scope for this to be extended further and to make reading a higher priority across the school. Sometimes the school does not maximise the use of time at the beginning and end of the day, lunchtimes and break times. ICT is taught across the curriculum but there are no specific ICT lessons, although there are plans to address this. A wide range of clubs, sporting activities, visitors, and trips enrich the taught curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and guidance shown by staff is outstanding and is clearly seen in their dedication and commitment to ensuring that all learners are healthy, happy and safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are in place and the child protection policy with regular training ensures that staff are aware of what procedures to follow. The school's disability awareness scheme has also raised staff awareness about equality of opportunity and the school has made adaptations to the environment to ensure access for all. Because learners are well supported by staff that are intuitive to their needs, they are challenged to make the best possible progress. Daily contact with a range of social, therapeutic and medical services ensures high quality support for pupils. There are detailed assessment systems to track learners' progress both in their learning and their personal development. These assessments are moderated internally to ensure they are accurate across the school and there are plans to form a special schools group across the county to support the moderation of assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The senior leadership team monitors and evaluates accurately the work of the school and they are beginning to develop the role of middle managers in this process. The senior leadership team has recently been extended to cover for a deputy who is on secondment and the middle management team has been re-organised in turn. The roles of these teams are currently being established and embedded. There is good capacity for further improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are beginning to become more involved in the day-to-day work of the school and to challenge, and hold the school to account. Finances are managed well and resources deployed so that learners are very well supported by a good ratio of adults to learners. The school achieves excellent 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	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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1	
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?	1	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1	

Achievement and standards

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

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	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	3	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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**

27 November 2008

Dear Children and Students

Inspection of Watling View School, Saint Albans, AL12NU

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 25 and 26 November. We enjoyed talking with you. Watling View is an outstanding school. We thought you would like to know what was so good about your school.

- The school is very well led by the headteacher and deputy and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; most of you come to school every day, behave well and are kind to each other.
- You are making excellent progress in your schoolwork and in your social skills.
- You like and respect your outstanding teachers and teaching assistants and work hard for them.
- You enjoy the good range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.
- Older students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

This is how we thought the school could get even better:

- the senior and middle managers could take more responsibility for different jobs around the school.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector