

Bleasdale House Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119861
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327141
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Muir 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.

Boarding provision
Social care URN
Social care inspector

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	20
Sixth form	4
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 Alan Greenwell
Headteacher	Mrs Anita Tidswell
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected

Age group	2–19
Inspection date	11 March 2009
Inspection number	327141

Date of previous childcare inspection

School address

Not previously inspected

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Silverdale

Carnforth

Lancashire

LA5 0RG

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Age group 2-19

Inspection date 11 March 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, an Additional Inspector and a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small residential and day school for boys and girls with profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. At present, there are no pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage of the school and four in the post-16 department. Pupils are working at the very earliest levels of development. There are currently 20 pupils on roll, of which 16 are boarders. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. All have statements of special educational needs. The school currently has two children who are looked after by the local authority. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The school currently holds six awards, including: Investors in People, Activemark, Sportsmark and the Healthy Schools Award.

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, which meets the needs of its pupils through well coordinated care and educational provision of the highest standard.

Pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. The very small steps that the school uses to monitor progress show that relative to their starting points and their profound and multiple needs, the great majority of pupils make significant improvements in the development of their personal and communication skills. All sixth form students leave school with external accreditation in a range of subjects.

Pupils make outstanding steps in their personal development during their time in the school and this area is a particular strength of the school. Pupils indicate that they love coming to school and benefit greatly from their time there. The consistent modelling of positive behaviour by all staff allows pupils to be educated in an environment based on respect and high expectations. The school promotes social, moral, cultural and spiritual behaviour very successfully and all pupils are exposed to a wide range of work, which provides experiences of cultures and religions different to their own. The village in which the school is located is very positive about involving the school in many aspects of its life. As one member of staff poetically stated, 'Inclusion is not accepted, it is expected'. Pupils' communication skills are developed extremely well and the school provides many opportunities for pupils to interact with others. The school ensures that pupils are looked after very well and are healthy and safe during their time in school. All parents who responded to the questionnaire were unanimously positive about the impact of the school's work on the lives of their children.

Teachers know the learning needs of the pupils well. They also have good knowledge of their subjects and therefore match the curriculum and their teaching styles very well to the pupils' needs overall. However, planning for learning occasionally lacks explicit reference to targets for pupils' development. The school's cross-curricular work and multi-sensory approach has developed well since the last inspection and is outstanding. As a consequence, lessons engage pupils greatly. Very effective support for the outstanding twenty-four hour curriculum is provided by teaching assistants and care staff who are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and contribute to the high expectations evident throughout the school. There are many opportunities for the pupils to work with those from other schools and the inclusion activities seen during the inspection benefited all parties involved. The excellent joint work between the care and education aspects of school ensures that the care, guidance and support provided by the school are consistently tailored to meet the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils. The school works extremely well with a wide range of support agencies so that all pupils receive the support to which they require. Transition in to the next stage of the pupils' lives is well planned and sensitively put into action to ensure a smooth period of change when pupils come to leave the school.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels and everyone shares the same vision and understands what the school is trying to achieve. The headteacher has put procedures in place to accurately monitor the performance of the school. This provides a clear picture of next steps for improvement. The school complies with all requirements for safeguarding. The school's role in promoting community cohesion is outstanding and most clearly seen in the inclusion practices mentioned above. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in the Early Years and Foundation Stage provision. Despite this, there is good planning in place to provide

all the requirements for an indoor curriculum which is adapted appropriately to meet the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the school has plans, which need to be implemented expeditiously, to replicate this in an outdoor environment. The post-16 provision provides a good standard of education and the school has well formulated plans to extend pupils' entitlement to work experience.

Governors provide excellent support and challenge to the school and have a good knowledge of its work. Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection and the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good overall. Students make outstanding progress in lessons because consistently good teaching and highly effective support meets the needs of students well. The curriculum prepares students well for life after school. All students leave school with appropriate external accreditation having gained the 'moving on' qualification in basic skills, key skills and daily living skills. However, while the curriculum is good overall, work related learning and suitable work experiences for the pupils are currently under-developed. The school is implementing plans to improve this but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on the outcomes for students. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear vision and purpose and an accurate view about how it needs to develop and improve. Students have good opportunities to link with, and gain experience of, the local community. They attend courses in music at a local college, hold coffee mornings for the local community and fund raise for others through such events as Red Nose Day.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Following scrutiny of planning documents, inspectors judged that the planning in this stage is good. Curriculum planning links well with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and is adapted to suit the needs of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school has plans to develop its outdoor provision in line with national requirements. When these plans come to fruition, the school will be well set to provide the full Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, indoors and out.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of boarding at Bleasdale House School is outstanding. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been fully addressed and all but one key standard is met. Appropriate systems effectively promote the care and welfare of young people. Care staff receive an extensive induction programme which prepares them for their role and responsibilities and gives them the basic skills to meet boarding pupils' needs. Ongoing training, support and supervision is provided to maintain their professional practice and development. Staff are fully motivated and demonstrate a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of boarders. They work closely with other members of the multi-disciplinary team and this contributes to the outstanding care provided to pupils. Boarding pupils' health needs are a priority. Their needs are assessed by relevant health professionals who work in the school and who are also able to provide ongoing therapy to boarding pupils. Comprehensive health plans are developed and regularly reviewed to ensure changes in need are identified and addressed. All boarders are registered with local surgeries and have access to a range of health professionals both on-site and in the community.

This ensures boarding pupils benefit from appropriate health provision, in accordance with their individual needs. Boarding pupils' health is also supported by effective and robust systems for the safe handling and storage of medicines. Boarding pupils' safety is effectively promoted by the school's policies and procedures. These are implemented effectively by staff. Ongoing training in safeguarding vulnerable young people ensures staff remain vigilant about monitoring boarding pupils' safety and are aware of the reporting process. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Rights are respected and promoted and boarders benefit from a service that is able to meet their holistic and diverse needs. Staff demonstrate a professional approach to ensuring that boarders feel safe and know they are loved and valued. While boarders are not able to contact others independently, staff take action to ensure they maintain contact with their parents and family members. Excellent use is made of community resources to promote boarding pupils' social skills. Residential staff are very positive and proactive in their approach to supporting the education of boarders. Excellent resources are available to enhance and assist with educational tasks such as self-help skills, communication and social skills. The school's policy of promoting a twenty-four hour curriculum is exemplified by the planning process for boarding pupils' care and education. Targets for individual boarding pupils are agreed by the multi-disciplinary team and are consistently worked towards by all staff. This greatly assists boarding pupils in developing their skills and experiences. The school provides a seamless service which promotes and celebrates individual boarding pupils' attainment and personal achievements. Staff provide positive role models for boarding pupils. They have an excellent understanding of each pupil and make good use of praise and encouragement to promote acceptable behaviour. Supportive strategies, such as deflection and diffusion, are deployed to manage unacceptable behaviour and these are implemented effectively. Clear guidance for staff in this area ensures consistency in responses to boarding pupils. The school is suitably staffed to meet the individual needs of boarding pupils residing at any one time. This is achieved by robust risk assessments and placement planning and takes account of the individual needs of boarding pupils. All staff employed at the school are appropriately vetted although there is a variation in the level of checks carried out on care staff. The residential provision offers ample space to boarding pupils which supports their needs well, especially their mobility needs. Good use is made of different rooms to address their physical, emotional, medical and learning needs. Appropriate leisure and play equipment is available and is regularly used to provide pupils with enjoyable experiences which contribute to their development. Young people's bedrooms are highly personalised to reflect their individual personalities and interests. The school is safe and effectively monitored and managed. There are detailed environmental and fire risk assessments. All parts of the building to which boarders have access are adapted to ensure young people have full access. The school's internal monitoring systems are effective in identifying any shortfalls in the service. However, the frequency of external monitoring visits does not fully support a robust quality assurance system.

Recommendations

- Ensure equitable checks are carried out on care staff and staff files contain all elements identified in the NMS (NMS 27.2)
- Ensure the external monitoring system is implemented in accordance with timescales identified in the NMS (NMS 33.2)

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop work experience opportunities to prepare post-16 students more fully for adult life.

- Ensure that all planning reflects pupils' individual education plan targets so that teaching can be more sharply focused on individual needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Pupils arrive in the school with standards which are significantly below the national average for all pupils due to their profound and multiple learning difficulties. The progress of pupils is suitably checked by close observations from staff and the use of a range of commercial assessment scales that measure the small steps of progress the pupils make. Staff use targets set in pupils' annual reviews to inform their individual education plans. To the school's credit it is developing its assessment systems further so that it can monitor pupils' progress in yet finer steps. The great majority of pupils make excellent progress in developing their communication skills. Some are able to start achieving a basic level of independence in making choices or expressing a preference by activating a switch. There are a small number of pupils who do not make measurable progress or who regress, due to their complex learning or medical needs. All sixth form students achieve external accreditation through the 'moving on' curriculum. The school's data shows that there is no difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being is an outstanding strength of this school. Pupils enjoy school and unauthorised absences are non-existent, although authorised absences are relatively high, understandably caused by the pupils' complex and medical needs. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. There is a strong sense of community in the school and pupils enjoy school and thrive in an environment where all staff know their needs well. The school is a well accepted aspect of the local community and the village is keen for pupils to attend any community events which are organised. Pupils continually learn about other cultures, through themed learning, and the displays of work throughout the school reflect their work on Africa, Egypt and India amongst others. Spirituality is fostered very well through daily assemblies, which follow a weekly theme. In the week of the inspection, the theme was 'Holi', the Hindu festival of colours and this was well suited to the school's multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning. Pupils work and play in class and house groups, so that they are exposed to different peer groups, to enable them to develop their interaction skills. In school, staff ensure pupils have healthy lifestyles and participate in a wide range of sporting activities, including orienteering. Parents unanimously say that their children feel safe in the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan well and have clear aims in their teaching. However, planning does not yet include explicit references to pupils' individual education plan targets. This means that opportunities are sometimes missed to further tailor teaching to meet individual needs even more effectively. Lessons observed were good and cross-curricular themes were well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and good skills in using themes to engage and challenge pupils in their work.

Inclusion is well developed in the school and pupils regularly share lessons with children from the local mainstream school in the village. Good questioning enhances pupils' learning. Knowledgeable and skilful teaching assistants support teachers well to enhance learning. Assessment procedures in lessons identify small steps of achievement and enable teachers to meet the learning needs of pupils well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of the curriculum is reflected in the outstanding progress made by pupils. It successfully enables pupils to learn through a multi-sensory approach suited to their needs. It successfully extends pupils' knowledge and experience of the world around them. The curriculum is based on themes, which are planned and taught through a range of exemplary cross-curricular activities. Strong features are the opportunities for inclusion such as the shared music opportunities with the local primary school at Key Stage 1 and the recently introduced orienteering led by the local school sports co-ordinator. Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits, which support the 24 hour curriculum exceptionally well and contribute very effectively to pupil achievement and personal development. The school also runs themed days, such as national poetry day and healthy schools activities to widen pupils' experience and incorporate a range of learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding collaboration between the school and the residence provides a strong base for the provision of excellent care, guidance and support for all pupils. There is a consistency of approach across the twenty-four hour curriculum which successfully supports pupils' personal development and achievement. Pupils' targets for improvement are jointly set by the class teacher, the pupil's key worker and professionals from support agencies who know the pupil well. This ensures relevance and continuity across the provision. The school sees parents and carers as the primary source of information about the pupils and ensures they are welcomed and encouraged to be active partners in their children's education. Parents value this and their views reflect the overwhelming support that they have for the school's care of their children. There are well established 'handover' times at the start and end of the school day and at other times, in which relevant information and updates are provided for the staff taking over the care of the pupils. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of life. An outstanding transition process sensitively and carefully provides pupils and parents with options available for the next stage in their lives from which choices can be made. Pupils are then supported through a multi-agency approach to ensure that transition is achieved as smoothly as possible. There is good nursing support in the school, provided by the local primary care trust, to oversee the pupils' medical needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The inspirational headteacher, supported by the highly effective senior leadership team, has set out a clear vision and direction for the school, based on the highest of expectations in care and education. The monitoring of the school's performance is well handled and accurate. The headteacher has introduced formal systems for

the monitoring of the quality of lessons, in a sensitive and supportive way. Staff receive constructive feedback and points for development following observations and this has helped the school meet effectively an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. The school's expertise in working with pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties has been recognised regionally and shared with others at conferences. Although school targets are often challenging and well met, the school is aware that these could be further refined to make them even more relevant to the needs of the pupils. The school works closely with parents so that school and home can jointly support the child to progress. The school also provides much appreciated support for parents. Governors support and challenge the school extremely well, through a system of committees and named governors linked to areas of the school's work.

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	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?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	IE ²	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	IE ²	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	IE ²	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	IE ²	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	IE ²	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	IE ²	

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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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	1	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
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	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
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	1	
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**

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14 March 2009

Dear pupils and students

Inspection of Bleasdale House Community Special School, Lancashire,

LA5 0RG

Thank you very much for welcoming me and my colleagues, Liz and Elaine, when we visited your school recently. I was very impressed to see how well the school works with you and understands your needs.

According to your parents, you all enjoy your time in school and feel very safe and well looked after. I agree with them that your school is outstanding. Mrs Tidswell leads the school very well and is clear about how she wants to improve it even more. Your teachers, care staff and other staff really enjoy teaching and caring for you and they make sure that you learn as much as you can at school and in the residence. They understand well what helps you to learn. Teachers are good at checking on how well you are doing and this means that they can help you to improve even more. Your behaviour and attitudes are excellent and I was pleased to see that you are very keen to learn new things. I was very impressed by the range of sporting activities that you are involved in, including orienteering. I also saw that when you are ready to leave school, you get good support to make choices for the future.

I have asked the school to improve in two areas of the work to make your time at school even more enjoyable and successful:

- to make sure that teachers always refer to your targets in their planning for lessons
- to make sure that students in the sixth form have chances to do work experience.

I wish you all success for the future in your excellent school and thank you again for your very warm welcome.

David Muir, HMI