

Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119897
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327148
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Reporting inspector	John Atkinson

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	71
Sixth form	14
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	11
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	1
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Naylor
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Dellow
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Holly Road Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire

Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Inspection number	327148

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Red Marsh is a day community special school for boys and girls with most coming from the Wyre district and a small number coming from further afield. All pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, have a statement of special educational need because of their severe, complex and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. Over half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. An increasing number of pupils join the school in Year 12 to access the further education unit. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher were appointed in 2008. The school achieved Activemark and Sportsmark status in 2008 and the Silver Eco award in 2009. The school has achieved national and Lancashire local authority Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Red Marsh is a good school with some outstanding features. It has an outstanding capacity to improve because of the strong and effective leadership of the headteacher who has good support from the recently established and able leadership team. Together, they have created an excellent ethos in which students, pupils and staff flourish and the quality of provision is improving rapidly. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support, resulting in students and pupils making outstanding personal development. The 'can do' culture that runs throughout the school encourages students and pupils to tackle new challenges with confidence, enthusiasm and a belief in themselves. This results in students' high self-esteem, ability to communicate personal opinions with conviction, and their effective contributions to school and community life. Students and pupils really enjoy coming to school because every day gives them opportunities to take an active part in meaningful and challenging activities which allow them to show what they are capable of. As a result, their attendance and behaviour are excellent and their attitudes to learning are very positive.

The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion through its very close links with mainstream schools, its organisation of additional sporting, leisure and cultural activities and its passionate commitment to improving the school environment for the benefit of the whole community. This is manifestly evident in the whole school commitment to and involvement in the Global Awareness project and the achievement of the Eco silver award.

Parents are delighted with the education children experience, recognising how much progress in learning their children make and valuing the meticulous care and support they receive. One parent commented: 'my child has made really good progress and come on leaps and bounds because of the staff's teaching skills'. The school goes the extra mile to support not only students and pupils but also parents and utilises its excellent links with external agencies to achieve this.

Teaching is good and, as a result, pupils work hard and persevere even when they find tasks to be challenging and demanding. Students and pupils make good progress in improving their key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and use them effectively in their everyday living. Key Stage 4 pupils achieve well in accredited courses at entry level. All pupils develop good personal skills that prepare them well for their futures. The effect is most noticeable in the pupils' high aspirations for themselves. As one Year 11 pupil commented, 'I like maths and want to get better at it as it will help me when I'm older.' Students' and pupils' work, reports and records show they achieve well. Good progress is supported through the improved system for setting and reviewing annual personal targets. End of year targets in English, mathematics and science are set but progress is not systematically tracked as closely as it could be throughout the year. Therefore, the small steps that pupils need to make to reach their target are not always recognised by staff and explained to pupils in lessons. A significant strength of the teaching is the excellent teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants who work seamlessly in guiding and supporting individuals, including those with PMLD. The school has recognised that the many changes of staff in recent years have led to some inconsistency in the accuracy of pupils' assessment and that processes are not yet in place to rectify this.

The curriculum is increasingly innovative with staff planning learning activities that make effective connections between different subjects. Opportunities in the community to make learning relevant and practical are effectively exploited.

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher has shaped a shared vision for the school with all of the staff. The relentless focus and passionate commitment to improving the quality of learning has significantly raised expectations and ambitions and the overall quality of provision. The work of subject leaders is broadening, but they have not yet had the opportunity to fully develop their monitoring and evaluating skills. Governors are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and offer good support as well as rigorous challenge.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The Further Education (FE) Unit is well organised with students grouped effectively according to their needs. This enables staff to provide a good range of work-related learning as well as a relevant and extended curriculum. Students make good progress academically and their personal development is excellent. Their overall achievement is good. They grow in confidence and maturity and, because of the range of opportunities and activities offered, they develop effective daily living skills. Most are successful in gaining an increasing number of externally accredited awards. Students are given wide opportunities to develop socially, through their involvement in many community projects and the school's environmental and leisure activities and this promotes community cohesion well. Teaching is good and work is well matched to students' needs. Good use of ICT supports learning effectively. Care, support and guidance are outstanding aspects of this provision, particularly with regard to the preparation for students' futures, and all are successfully placed in employment, education or training when they leave the school. Leadership and management are good. There is a good vision for the development of courses and tailoring to personal needs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

This stage provides a good learning environment for all children. Detailed planning and organisation promotes children's good personal, social and emotional development and their communication skills and overall, children's achievement is good. There is a good balance between activities led by staff and activities that children choose for themselves. Regular recording of any small steps in progress ensures that staff know how well children are learning. Good use is made of outdoor space. The provision is well staffed so that children are given a lot of individual attention which makes them feel secure, and this builds their confidence. However profound children's learning difficulties and/or disabilities are, staff take every opportunity to promote their independence by including them effectively in all activities. Children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well in all respects. Behaviour is very well managed and children receive expert and sensitive support. Very effective communication with parents or carers ensures that children make a good start to their learning journey and settle into school quickly. The early years provision is led and managed very well and is effective in bringing staff and children together to create happy and successful learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more frequent opportunities for subject leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that students and pupils make in their subjects.

- Ensure that the school's systems for tracking progress during the year identify the next steps that pupils need to take to reach their end of year targets.
- Provide support and training to ensure that assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate and consistent.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, particularly in developing the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards attained are well below those expected of pupils of similar ages in mainstream schools. However, pupils make good progress throughout their school career because of the outstanding support they receive, which helps them to overcome the barriers to their learning. Pupils in the primary department get off to a good start in learning basic skills and this continues into the secondary phase. In Key Stage 4 pupils begin successfully to adapt these skills towards gaining external qualifications. Older pupils and students in the FE unit reach their potential by gaining a range of nationally accredited Unit Awards and, where possible, Entry Level qualifications. The older pupils make good progress in all aspects of work-related learning. All the pupils make consistently outstanding progress in meeting challenging targets for their personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students and pupils of all ages respect one another and are considerate, helpful, friendly and very well behaved. They contribute their efforts and time generously to local community projects, including recycling, and take part in fundraising for charities. Pupils express a passionate commitment to the ideals of inclusion and community cohesion and are excellent role models. Attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Lessons are thoroughly enjoyed. Pupils love coming to school and show this with their exceptionally good attendance. They feel very safe and do not think that there is any bullying or racism. They are very well informed about healthy eating, understand a well balanced diet and are well trained in basic cookery skills. They are very keen on keeping active and taking part in sport. The school sports clubs are fully subscribed. Students and pupils feel that their voice is listened to and are proud that the school council has helped to improve the school. The opportunities for work experience and participation in vocational courses, combined with pupils' exceptional progress in developing confidence and inter-personal skills, mean that they get excellent preparation for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Staff have excellent relationships with students and pupils and create a positive classroom ethos that supports their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and lessons are well structured and planning is clear. Time is fully and effectively used to support pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy sharing their work during plenary sessions, which give them an opportunity to celebrate each other's success. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is not always accurate and progress towards end of year targets is not yet tracked closely enough. As a result, teaching does not take enough

account of the small steps that pupils need to make nor are these explained well enough to pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils. It is well planned and has good emphasis on developing basic skills and personal, health and social education, which supports pupils' outstanding personal development. The curricula for young children and post-16 students are good and, as with the rest of the school, a good range of additional activities enhances pupils' learning and enjoyment. There are very good links with local schools and the local college and these lead to good opportunities for pupils to become more independent. Work experience, enterprise activities and residential visits support pupils' personal and social development and give them opportunities to learn new things in different situations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Commitment to promoting the health, safety and well-being of pupils is very strong. Arrangements to protect pupils are well established and work very effectively. All necessary risk assessments are undertaken. Parents feel that the school welcomes them as partners in the education of their children. The school is vigilant in safeguarding the interests of its most vulnerable pupils and their families. Where necessary it takes a lead in organising the support of other agencies to work with families in times of crisis. Students and pupils receive excellent levels of personal support to ensure that they take a full part in all the school's extensive range of activities. Students' individual educational plans provide very effective guidance and identify the support that needed to ensure good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's very effective and strong leadership results in successful teamwork. Although the senior leadership team is relatively new, its focus on learning, its commitment to staff development and its ability to identify the key priorities for development have generated a whole school desire for improvement. This has resulted in high morale, a strong sense of unity and purpose, improved teaching and learning and students gaining in confidence in all aspects of their personal development. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and where it needs to be further developed. As yet, subject leaders have not yet had sufficient opportunity to fully develop their monitoring role. The school evaluates the impact of the school's contribution to community cohesion closely, particularly in relation to its impact on pupils' personal development. Governance is good and many governors are frequently involved in the day-to-day life 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	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?	2	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	1	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?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	1	
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	1	

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?	2	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?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	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**

9 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School, Lancashire, FY5 4HH

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I inspected your school. I was impressed by how friendly and polite you were. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to the very positive things that you had to say about the school and staff who support you. I was very impressed by your attitudes towards the environment and the ways in which you all recycle as much waste as possible and take great care of the school's grounds. You all seemed to enjoy lessons and the other opportunities you are offered in school and with all the sport that you do I am not surprised that you are as fit as you are. I quickly discovered from discussions with you and the staff why you do so well in school.

- You have a really good learning environment with good resources, which is always calm and peaceful.
- The staff work very well as a team to look after you and are always prepared to listen and support you.
- You do tasks that are interesting and challenging as well as having many extra-curricular activities available.
- You are expected to work hard and help each other.

It is very clear that you enjoy school and all of your lessons. I know how much the younger children enjoyed the 'Bear Hunt'! Your parents are also really pleased at how much improvement you have made and continue to make. I discussed with the headteacher how the school could improve and we agreed a number of points.

- Staff will check your progress carefully each term to ensure you know the next steps you need to reach to improve in each subject.
- Staff will make sure that they assess your work accurately.
- Staff in charge of certain subjects will monitor how well you are learning those subjects.

However the most important thing is that you continue to be as positive, enthusiastic and optimistic as you were during my visit. I do hope you all do well in future years.

Yours sincerely

John Atkinson

Lead inspector