

The Garth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120752
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327354
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Charlie Henry HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	35
Sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Corcoran
Headteacher	Daran Bland
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
School address	Pinchbeck Road Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 1QF
Telephone number	01775 725566
Fax number	01775 768829
Email address	enquiries@garth.lincs.sch.uk

Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Inspection number	327354

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited eight lessons, and held meetings with the school council, staff and governors. He observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including subject and lesson plans, pupil assessment records and the school improvement plan. Responses from 22 parent questionnaires and 25 staff questionnaires were analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress over time
- how well the mixed key stage classes for the youngest and oldest pupils meet their individual needs
- the effectiveness of school improvement planning.

Information about the school

The current headteacher joined the school in January 2007 following a period of 18 months of temporary leadership. The school federated with another special school in June 2007 and this settled a lengthy period of uncertainty about the school's future. There has been increase of more than 25% of pupils over the last year. The school meets the needs of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties; some also have physical and sensory disabilities. A third of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There is a crèche on two mornings each week to support the work of the Portage home visiting service that is based at the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for the Nursery and the Reception children is located within the Year 1 class.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	35	Below average
Free school meals	23%	Average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	All	Not applicable
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	8%	Average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	6%	Average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	All	Not applicable

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Garth School is a good school. It is rapidly improving and shows good capacity for sustained improvement based on a thorough review of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Important improvements have been achieved in the detailed curriculum planning that is linked effectively to procedures to accurately assess how well pupils are learning. Planning for the EYFS has not yet been completed. There is insufficient analysis to make full use of the wide range of information about how well pupils are making progress and the quality of the school's work. Pupils make good progress and their personal development is also good. Older pupils at Key Stage 4 and post 16 make the most progress. Teaching is good overall; some is outstanding. Interesting lessons are based on a good understanding of pupils' individual needs. The pace of lessons is usually good although occasionally pupils have to wait too long to take part in learning activities. Teaching assistants contribute well. A very strong feature of the school is the quality of care it provides. The warm greeting received by pupils as they arrive at school is characteristic of the approach of all staff to ensure their happiness and wellbeing. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Complete the planning of the curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that all aspects of this framework are met.
- Systematically evaluate all of the information about pupils' progress and the quality of the school's provision and use this to further inform school improvement planning and target setting.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Achievement is good. Most pupils make good progress. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and those who are post 16 do particularly well. Throughout the school those who have the most complex needs and those who have severe learning difficulties achieve as well as one another. Similarly pupils with additional learning difficulties, for example

those who have ASD, also make as much progress as other pupils.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and want to learn. The youngest pupils eagerly explored different resources as part of the story of *The Enormous Turnip*. Older pupils were keen to use the interactive whiteboard to show what they had learned within a numeracy lesson. They get on together very well, helping one another when they can. They play enthusiastically at playtimes. Behaviour is good. Pupils show the sense of caring that is promoted so strongly by staff. They know whom to ask for help when they feel sad or unhappy. Parents strongly agree that their children are safe and happy at school.

All pupils help in class by taking on responsibilities to help their teachers and assistants, for example by giving out and collecting resources. Some take part in the school council and make good decisions about how to further improve school, for example, by selecting the healthy foods that should be in the tuck-shop. The older pupils are developing appropriate skills and understanding for their adult life through improvements that have been made to their curriculum, including increasing their understanding of the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Lessons are well planned with a range and variety of interesting activities that maintain pupils' motivation. Good use of interactive whiteboards captures interest and provides opportunities for active participation in learning. Behaviour management is good; staff 'nip things in the bud' and make sure there are no interruptions from learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress. Teachers carefully monitor the activities of the small group work of pupils, providing additional input if necessary. Detailed knowledge contributes well to

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

making sure that individual pupils' needs are met, for example, the specific means of communication for those who have the most complex learning difficulties.

Signing is not always used consistently. Occasionally the pace of learning slows as pupils have to wait for their turn and staff resources are not used as effectively to minimise this. There are a few weaknesses in resources, for example the lack of appropriate height tables for wheelchair users in some rooms, and the group teaching facilities for information and communication technology in the school's entrance foyer.

Assessment and systems to track progress are developing well. A new scheme has been introduced effectively and now provides a secure understanding of pupils' attainment from which progress can be evaluated. Individual education plans helpfully focus on important aspects of personal and social development, and communication. Moderation processes are in place to ensure these practices are challenging. Pupils' individual end of term assessments show a clear track record of their good progress. However, information from these is not sufficiently analysed at a whole school level to further inform school improvement planning and target setting.

The curriculum is good and ensures pupils have a wide variety of learning experiences as they progress through the school. There is an effective link between curriculum planning and assessment practice. This means that the mixed age classes, especially those for the youngest and oldest pupils have their individual needs met well. This is achieved for the youngest children by planning towards both the P levels (pre National Curriculum level 1 sub levels) and the EYFS framework. Similarly, the introduction of an award scheme enables pupils at different levels in Key Stage 4 and at post 16 to work effectively within the same group. The curriculum is broadened though links with its federated special school, two mainstream primary schools and a local college of further education. Curriculum enrichment opportunities are very good, particularly through the Friday afternoon sessions led by teaching assistants. The Portage home visiting service and the new crèche provide good opportunities for young children and valuable support their parents.

Staff know pupils' personal development needs very well. The school provides a very safe and welcoming environment for pupils. They are greeted warmly when they first arrive at school in the morning and this very caring approach continues throughout the school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since their appointment and the federation of the school the head and deputy have worked very effectively to lead development. Feedback from staff shows very strong support for their leadership. The improvements that have been made are based on a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have brought about improvement to the education and well-being of pupils. There are well established procedures to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of their education, although further work is needed to draw together the systematic analysis of all of this information.

Self evaluation is accurate and effectively establishes the areas for improvement. The school improvement plan sets out an ambitious agenda. Core priorities have been set and progress towards achieving these has been swift.

Safeguarding procedures have been reviewed and are good. Risk assessments are thorough. All required staff vetting takes place. The school meets its responsibilities under equalities legislation and is planning to review further its policies and procedures. It has a disability equality action plan that it has begun to implement. The school works successfully to make sure it is part of the local community and to raises pupils' awareness of the wider community, for example through its curriculum theme days and visitors to the school.

The governors have shown commendable effort in the additional work required when the school became federated. They have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The school works outstandingly well with parents. Parents' views are routinely sought and used to contribute to school improvement. They value the information they receive about their children's work and know they are always listened to if they wish to make suggestions or have matters to discuss.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Progress in learning for the youngest children is satisfactory. Appropriate emphasis is placed on communication and this aspect of learning is developing well. The children's personal development and well-being are good. They are inquisitive and want to learn. The children join in as part of their class and make choices. The children grow in confidence.

Children are helped to learn satisfactorily. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the wide range of needs in the group. Ongoing assessment effectively builds up a good picture of the progress being made. Occasionally, children have to wait too long before they can take part in an activity.

Curriculum planning is satisfactory. It is based on both the EYFS framework and P (pre National Curriculum) levels. This allows continuity of planning as the children in the EYFS enter Key Stage 1. Further development is required to fully integrate these two approaches. The welfare of the children is promoted well. The quality of their care is very good. The management of behaviour is effective. Risk assessments are thorough.

There is effective management of the needs of these children alongside those at Key Stage 1 who are part of the same class group.

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?*	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?*	3
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?*	2
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	3

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Sixth form

Pupils make good progress as they gain skills and knowledge that will help them as they move on from school. They spend more time learning in the community, including going to college. Plans are in hand to further increase work related learning. All pupils work successfully towards nationally recognised awards. They take on more responsibility, for example, running the Friday tuck-shop. Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are exciting and well organised. Teaching assistants use their very good knowledge of pupils to make sure they are involved well in all parts of the lesson.

The curriculum is good. It is sufficiently broad and takes into account pupils' interests and their likely future needs. The award schemes that are used ensure each pupil's needs are met effectively. Good management makes sure that the needs of these pupils are met well, alongside those at Key Stage 4 who are in the same class group.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The views from parent questionnaires support the outcomes of the school's own recent parent survey.

There is overwhelming support from parents for the school's work. Parents consider that their children make good progress, for example, in increasing their independence. They feel that: the school is successful at meeting each child's individual needs; their children enjoy school; and that the school has a high regard for safety.

Parents are very supportive of the school's staff and leadership. Several commented specifically on the rate of improvement seen in the last 18 months, since the appointment of the headteacher.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Garth School, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF

I like your school.

I really enjoyed the time I spent seeing all of the things you did.

Thank you to the school council for telling me the best things about your school.

There are lots of good things about the Garth School. Here are some.

- You like school.
- You learn lots of new things.
- You behave well.
- You are kind to each other.
- Everyone at school takes care of you well.
- Your parents think school is really good.

Daran, Sue and all of the other staff are working hard to make your school even better.

- They are going to make sure that the youngest children learn about all of the things they need to.
- They will look at all the information they have about how well you are doing so that they can make the school even better.

You can help them by continuing to work hard and be nice.

Charlie Henry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.