

Exhall Grange School and Science College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 125794 |
| Local Authority | Warwickshire |
| Inspection number | 328401 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 February 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Helen Barter |

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.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 187 |
| Sixth form | 36 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Andrew Kennedy |
| Headteacher | Mr John Truman |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21–22 March 2006 |
| School address | Easter Way Ash Green Coventry CV7 9HP |
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and representatives of partner organisations. Inspectors attended an annual review meeting and an assembly for secondary age pupils. A visit was made to Wheelwright Lane Primary School where primary age pupils are dual-registered. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including data on pupils' progress, pupils' individual education plans, the school's improvement plan and 54 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's specialisms in science and special educational needs in promoting and improving outcomes for all groups of pupils
- how well the school is improving pupils' learning in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and in the sixth form
- how well teaching meets the needs of the increasingly diverse pupil population
- how well the school is working to improve communication with parents
- the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about the school

Exhall Grange was redesignated as a science college in November 2007 and was granted special educational needs (physical and sensory) specialist status in September 2008. All pupils have significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities, predominantly physical disability, visual impairment or autistic spectrum disorders. There are some children with profound and complex learning difficulties in the specialist Nursery. Most children move on to Exhall Grange, although some go to mainstream or other special schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small number from different ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils are identified as being at the early stages of learning English. The school has Activemark and Sportsmark awards and National Healthy School status. A three-year phased building project began in March 2007 to improve the condition of the school. This is currently causing some disruption.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Exhall Grange School is outstanding and makes an impressive difference to the lives of its pupils and students. One parent sums up the school's effectiveness by saying, 'The school is very good at developing each child's individual education needs and developing their potential.' This is down to the professional and rigorous leadership of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, the strong, effective teamwork throughout the school, and the support and challenge offered by the governing body. Everyone evaluates meticulously the effectiveness of actions taken to improve pupils' progress and prepare them for life ahead. As a result, the key priorities for improvement are identified accurately.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a superb start because of high quality provision. As pupils move through the school they are exceedingly well prepared for life ahead having achieved tremendously in improving their mobility and communication skills, while gaining independence, excellent behaviour and maturity. By the age of 16, all pupils have gained at least one national qualification and most go on to further education. Although standards vary widely and are low overall, all pupils make excellent progress from their starting points through high quality support, guidance and care and effective teaching. While assessment information is used well to plan activities which are matched accurately to pupils' abilities, lesson plans often describe activities to be undertaken rather than clearly identifying what is to be learned. Thus, opportunities to share these expectations with pupils to help them understand how well they are learning are sometimes missed.

The school questions itself constantly about how well it is meeting the needs of its pupils. It uses all available data, including national comparisons, to examine closely whether each pupil is achieving to their full potential and takes effective action where this is not the case. This has led to improved teaching and pupils' progress in mathematics, a reorganisation of how pupils are taught in Key Stage 3 and the need to review the curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 19. Students in the sixth form achieve well in many respects, and the traditional GCSE and A-level routes offer appropriate challenge to some. However, pathways available to others, particularly the increasing number with learning difficulties, are currently restricted and limit some students' achievement.

The school has outstanding capacity to sustain its track record of improvement. Nowhere is this more evident than in the impact that the school's science specialism has. This is seen in the strong upward trend in pupils' achievement, the enhanced ICT resources and the impact on the wider community; for example, the use of facilities by adult community education groups and the flagship science fair attended by pupils from 12 primary schools. Additionally, the new special educational needs specialism is building the school's capacity to support pupils' complex needs and widening the understanding in the community that disability should not be a barrier to learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement at post-16 by:
 - developing the curriculum for pupils from the age of 14 to 19 to offer courses and pathways which are tailored closely to their needs and abilities
 - ensuring staff have training to improve their capacity to deliver new programmes in the curriculum
 - ensuring senior leaders monitor the effectiveness of the new curriculum in improving all students' achievements.
- Improve assessment further by ensuring:
 - teachers identify consistently in lesson plans what it is they expect pupils to learn from the planned activities
 - share these expectations with pupils so that they can assess for themselves how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

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Pupils develop extremely well academically and personally and this is why pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning are outstanding. Pupils work hard and have very positive attitudes because they know their individual achievements are valued. Pupils' commitment is demonstrated through high attendance rates and excellent behaviour. Indeed, pupils with behaviour difficulties told inspectors how grateful they are for the help they receive to improve their behaviour and self-control. A high level of engagement was seen amongst primary pupils looking at old toys in a history lesson and more able secondary pupils in preparing an ICT presentation in a science lesson. Pupils with physical disabilities make outstanding gains in their mobility, moving confidently and safely around the school to become competent wheelchair users. Pupils with visual or hearing impairment and those who have communication difficulties learn to use all the resources available to them, such as Braille, ICT, signing and symbols.

The extensive range of data on each pupil's performance is carefully analysed to show that different groups of pupils, such as those in the care of the local authority or who speak English as an additional language, all achieve equally well from their starting points. In Key Stages 1 and 2, a high proportion of pupils exceed their

targets, particularly in reading. Similarly in Key Stage 3, outstanding progress is made in reading and pupils also exceed their targets in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain GCSE passes from entry level qualification and a small proportion attain five or more A* to C grades. Students, including those in wheelchairs, experience the world of work through successful placements in the community.

There are a number of other key features of pupil outcomes.

- Pupils' emotional welfare is strong. They feel very safe and are very positive about help from staff when they have personal worries and concerns.
- The high level of participation in sport and physical education is evidence of pupils' commitment to fitness and a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils and students are superb ambassadors for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties in the community.
- Pupils' social, moral and cultural development is excellent because they have a high level of care, respect and understanding for others, no matter what their background, culture or disability.
- Pupils' confidence, self-esteem and insight into how the school has helped them are evidence that they reflect on their experiences and demonstrate outstanding spiritual development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

The quality of the school's work

Teachers use resources (including physical and communication aids and ICT) exceedingly well and this removes barriers to pupils' learning. As a result, lessons are fully inclusive and pupils learn to the best of their ability. For example, in a Key Stage 1 science lesson, the teacher used the sensory room facilities effectively so that

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

partially sighted pupils could feel the sensation of bubbles on their hands and faces while others experimented by blowing bubbles. In a Year 7 lesson, good use was made of tactile and sensory resources to help some pupils identify shapes, while others worked out the shape's area.

Other lesson observations found that the most significant features of teaching which supported pupils' achievements were:

- brisk pace and very good use of time which helped pupils to maintain attention throughout the lesson and maximised their learning
- well-planned and organised lessons which gave pupils every opportunity to learn through practical and stimulating activities
- very good subject knowledge across the curriculum
- staff expertise in the use of signing and symbols, and the proficiency of many in using strategies to overcome the barriers faced by pupils with autistic spectrum disorder
- strong teamwork between teachers and support staff and their high level of understanding of pupils' disabilities and learning difficulties
- the encouragement and celebration of effort and achievement with praise.

The school is highly focused on tracking pupils' progress. Action plans are already in place to ensure that pupils' progress in ICT catches up with the good progress made in mathematics. Targets in individual education plans are shared with pupils. Older pupils say that they have much better involvement in determining these than they had in the past. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in assessing their own work and identifying what they need to do to improve in lessons are inconsistent, mainly because teachers do not identify these opportunities in lesson plans.

The curriculum constantly changes so that it meets the pupils' needs extremely well. In all key stages there is a very good balance between academic content and developing personal and life skills needed for future life. For example, primary pupils who attend the neighbouring school are fully integrated with their peers while learning French. Teaching of wheelchair mobility and independence plays an important role in supporting preparation for life outside school. Staff give a great deal of time and energy to providing pupils with a wide range of enriching activities such as residential visits, science based shows like the recent 'Musical Squares', competitive sports events and visits to places of interest such as Twycross Zoo.

The school provides excellent support, guidance and care because the school makes the best possible use of the medical and therapeutic staff based at the school as well as its excellent partnerships with agencies located on the school site such as the Integrated Disability Service and Take-a-Break. Therefore, pupils and their families are supported really well. Excellent attention is also given to health and safety around the school site with risk assessments firmly in place. Strong emphasis is placed on the importance of the pupil voice through the sports and school councils and the forum for the blind and partially sighted.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| High quality teaching and purposeful learning | 1 |
| Effective assessment | 2 |
| An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations | 1 |
| Support, guidance and care | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The key to the school's success is the way in which senior leaders are dedicated in their pursuit of excellence and innovation. The headteacher is a strong and committed leader who articulates a very clear vision of where the school is going. The school's practice is rooted in open and accurate self-evaluation because monitoring of teaching, scrutiny of data on pupils' progress and the views of parents and other stakeholders are key instruments in identifying what needs to improve. The involvement of middle leaders in these processes is much improved since the previous inspection because they play a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The governing body has developed an insightful critical friendship with the school, ensuring that it provides equality of opportunity for all pupils and achieves excellent value for money.

The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. Within the school there is a 'can do' culture which ensures that pupils are fully prepared as valuable members of their community. This ethos spreads wider through the excellent, strategic work promoted through the school's specialisms and the strong and productive links with partner organisations locally, nationally and globally, for example with the Helen Keller School in Jerusalem.

At the time of the inspection, the school met the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| Communicating ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination | 1 |
| Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective | 1 |
| Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion | 1 |
| Deploying resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children thrive exceedingly well in the specialist Nursery. The team-working approach between teachers, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and the nurse is a significant strength of the outstanding provision. All use their expertise to the full to help children overcome their individual difficulties. The highest attention is given to children's welfare, helping them feel comfortable, safe and gain in confidence. The spacious accommodation is carefully organised indoors and out so that children can practise safely their mobility skills and be independent when choosing activities. Children greatly enjoy daily routines, such as snack time, which develop their social and communication skills. They behave exceptionally well, cheerfully greeting those who join the table for toast and a drink.

Although standards are much lower than usually seen at the end of the Reception Year, children make outstanding gains from their starting points, due to high quality teaching. Staff make excellent use of observations and assessments to plan activities which are matched exactly to the children's learning and development needs. Children are motivated to explore through exciting activities such as building a snowman, creating textured paintings with rollers and making lanterns for Chinese New Year. They improve their walking and sitting, develop dexterity by rolling dough 'sausages' and doing shape puzzles, make marks with large chalks in preparation for writing, and read and enjoy stories. While important focus is placed on the development of children's early literacy skills and their personal, social and emotional development, there is also a tremendous sense of enjoyment which creates a very positive learning experience for all.

The outstanding leadership and management of the Nursery ensure that monitoring is clearly focused on ensuring that the provision successfully meets children's complex needs. The building of supportive relationships with parents and carers has top priority. They are delighted, saying that there is 'an outstanding level of support', 'communication is excellent' and their child 'has exceeded all our expectations and would not have done so without the help of the school'.

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| How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | 1 |
| What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | 1 |
| How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | 1 |
| Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | 1 |

Sixth form

The varying range of ability in the sixth form each year means that there is no definable trend in examination results over time. The impact of the school's specialism is clearly seen in the 100% success rate in Business and Technology Education Council Level 1 science last year and the number of more able pupils planning to take A levels in science next year. Accreditation in, for example, sports

leadership, art and design, communication skills, ICT and Certificate of Personal Effectiveness is going some way to meet the needs of those students for whom A-level courses are too demanding. However, senior leaders have high expectations and are not content with the current curriculum because it restricts students' choices. They recognise the need to increase the scope of opportunities and match them more closely to each student's present and future needs. Senior leaders also know that not all teachers are yet fully confident in delivering programmes beyond those traditionally offered by the school.

Despite these reservations, the sixth form is outstanding in its work to support students' personal development. Students' behaviour and attitudes are excellent because staff promote a mature and adult atmosphere. They are excellent role models for younger pupils to follow, whether as leaders of the school council, representing the views of young people with disability at the youth forum or helping others around the school. Students voice very positive views of the difference that Exhall Grange has made to them, summed up by one who said, 'I could hardly read before I came. The school couldn't have been more helpful and I am so grateful.' There is an excellent working relationship with the Connexions service to ensure that students move smoothly on to the next stage of their lives. Almost all go on to further education or training.

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| 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 |
| The overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the parental questionnaires returned were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. Many parents express gratitude for the difference the school makes to their children's learning and personal development saying that they come on in 'leaps and bounds'. Parents may wish to know that the small number of criticisms were all explored and taken into account in coming to judgements about the school. Through its own questionnaires and discussions with parents, the school acknowledges that it could further improve its communication with parents. Inspectors are assured of the school's commitment and ability to improve further this area of its work.

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
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| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% 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 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% 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 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate. |

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| 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. |



13 February 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Exhall Grange School and Science College, Coventry, CV7 9HP

Thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you. You will be pleased to know that we found Exhall Grange to be an outstanding school. Here are some of the many very good things we found.

- You all enjoy school very much. Your attendance and behaviour are excellent.
- You are very well cared for and so you feel safe at school.
- The school is excellent at preparing you for adult life.
- You are provided with many interesting opportunities to learn. It was great to hear primary children learning the names of fruit in French. I really enjoyed your Darwin assembly.
- Your school council is very keen to hear your views and improve the school.

Your headteacher leads the school extremely well and all the staff work hard to help you and make the school even better. To help, we have asked them to make sure that older pupils and students have a wider range of courses to choose from. Also, when teachers plan your lessons, we would like them to tell you what they expect you to learn and to check how well you think you have done at the end.

You can help by looking carefully at your work and thinking about what you could have done to make it even better.

Thank you again for all your help with the inspection. Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Helen Barter
Lead inspector

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