

The Round Oak School and Support Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125806
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328403
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	140
Sixth form	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Parker
Headteacher	Puffin Pocock
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
School address	Brittain Lane Warwick Warwickshire CV34 6DX
Telephone number	01926 423311
Fax number	01926 887371

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Until September 2007, Round Oak School and Support Service was an all age school for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties. From September 2007, it moved to a new purpose built site and amalgamated with the secondary department and sixth form of another special school to become a secondary special school catering for a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include pupils with statements of special educational needs for autistic spectrum disorders, profound and multiple learning difficulties, visual and/or hearing impairments, attention deficit and hyperactive disorders, moderate and severe learning difficulties and multi-sensory impairment. Of the current pupils on roll, there are more than double the number of boys than girls, three pupils for whom English is not their home language and 11% who are in the care of the local authority. The support service provides advice to staff and individual support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities being educated in mainstream schools. There is a privately run playscheme that operates on the school premises during the school holidays.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Round Oak school and Support Service is outstanding. It is very effective at meeting the wide-ranging special educational needs of pupils. 'I couldn't think of a better or nicer place for her to be,' is a typical example of the overwhelmingly positive comments of parents about the school. The support service, in its work supporting pupils in mainstream, is equally as effective and very much valued by mainstream staff. Given the recent significant change of nature of the school the outstanding quality of the school's work is a remarkable achievement and testament to excellent leadership and management. At the forefront of this has been the headteacher who displays inspirational leadership qualities. She is playing a pivotal role in the development of what effectively is a new school and, together with her senior colleagues, is very successfully combining the differing skills and experiences of staff to create a highly professional staff team fully committed to providing the very best they can for the pupils. The road to becoming such a highly effective school and support service has not been easy but through very sensitive management, staff, parents and governors are now united in their belief in the success of the school. 'What an excellent new school,' is how one parent put it.

A great deal of thought has been given to developing an excellent curriculum in the main school that meets the needs of individuals very well and builds on their prior learning. Within the curriculum there are numerous opportunities to celebrate diversity and ensure equality in relation to opportunities to achieve. Extensive links with the local community add to the pupils' opportunities and experiences. These result in outstanding achievement as demonstrated by a very wide range of external accreditation gained by pupils. These range from more able pupils achieving GCSEs, to pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties passing Moving On and Accreditation for Life and Living modules. Achievement in art is exceptional and includes a pupil gaining a GCSE grade A last year. Currently seven sixth form students are undertaking an AS level course in art. Comprehensive data on pupils' achievements has been collated and carefully analysed and there are good plans to use a software program to enable comparison with pupil achievement in similar schools.

Throughout the school teaching and learning are excellent. Very good staff training has ensured there is real consistency in the approaches of teachers. They plan very well to meet the differing needs of pupils. Effective use is made of specialist strategies where appropriate, but without slavishly sticking to one approach to the detriment of providing all pupils with a wide range of experiences. For example, a very well organised curriculum and the use of flexible teaching strategies enables pupils with complex difficulties to follow specialist individual programmes but at other times integrate with other pupils for lessons and activities. Students in the sixth form also achieve well and benefit equally from these flexible approaches. The sixth form has developed rapidly and successfully since being established as part of the new school. The already good curriculum is growing in strength, with the school planning to extend further the range of learning opportunities. The increased numbers of students wanting to stay on reflects the effectiveness of the department.

Pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development. Well above average attendance rates demonstrate pupils' excellent enjoyment of school. Pupils express how much they like the activities and appreciate the support they receive. 'Everybody in this school is my best friend' commented a member of the school council, whilst another pupil eagerly explained his role as a 'bullybuster', stressing how he keeps a look out for anything untoward and how he would say 'I will need to refer this to a member of staff' if anything did occur.

The governors provide the school with excellent support, fulfilling their role very effectively. Their procedures to ensure accountability are very robust and mean they have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. Self-evaluation is very thorough and reflects the high aspirations the school has to be as effective as it can be. This has led to the development of a very good development plan, well linked to promoting all the aspects of the Every Child Matters national agenda. This demonstrates that despite the excellent provision already established, the school has the capacity to develop even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students in the sixth form achieve as well as other pupils in the school. The great majority of sixth formers have significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the provision that has been developed meets their needs very well. This was demonstrated last year by the high number of Moving On modules achieved by all students. Students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, achieved an average of 17 modular passes. An age-appropriate curriculum has been very successfully developed since the new school was established. As in the main school, students benefit greatly from the variety of provision made, including high quality individual programmes and opportunities to work and learn with others. Further developments are planned to extend the range of learning opportunities. Students show a very high degree of enjoyment and an increasing number want to stay on. Activities are very well matched to the age and growing maturity of individuals and include excellent opportunities to be involved in the local community. For example, students help serve in a local café on one day each week. Leadership and management of the department are excellent and have ensured that within such a short time the overall quality of the provision is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement plans to compare pupils' achievements with those of pupils in similar schools.
- Implement plans to extend learning opportunities in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Overall standards are below average in the main school. They are even lower in the sixth form because of students' more significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Extensive opportunities to achieve external accreditation led to all Year 11 pupils passing at least one external examination last year. These included 12 pupils passing a GCSE in art and eight achieving a GCSE in information and communication technology (ICT). At the end of Year 9 a small number of pupils achieve average standards in the national assessment tests. Pupils' outstanding progress is shown in the data the school collects on their achievements. This data shows that the majority of pupils make excellent rates of progress overall in literacy and numeracy, as well as in personal and social development. However, the progress made by girls in reading is not quite as rapid as that of boys and plans to address this have been promptly implemented.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All pupils, irrespective of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress in their personal development. A real strength is the excellent understanding pupils develop

of the benefits of leading healthy lifestyles. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 take up sports and leisure options and many pupils join the lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils really enjoy being at the school and clearly demonstrate in their comments and their excellent behaviour that they feel really safe. This gives them increased confidence as is demonstrated by their enthusiastic involvement in the school council and in their roles as 'bullybusters' and school prefects. Incidents of bullying are very rare and pupils know that staff will deal with these effectively.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop strong and positive relationships with each other and with staff. They appreciate and enjoy the many cultural experiences in and out of school. These include taking part in local inter-cultural festivals, an arts week and performing as part of the Warwickshire schools' Shakespeare festival. Pupils make excellent progress in developing their economic well-being. All participate fully in work experience or experiences of work and the school bank provides pupils with a good understanding of monetary value.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is consistently very effective in meeting the differing needs of pupils. Typically, in lessons, the differences in pupils' ability and preferred learning styles are recognised and planning to address these is excellent. Specialist teaching strategies, for example signing or symbols, are used as required. Activities are very well matched to individual needs. The use of flexibility, for example in combining high quality individual programmes with frequent opportunities to learn with peers, considerably enhances enjoyment and achievement. Both staff and pupils make very good use of ICT. Teachers seek to reinforce learning through providing regular feedback to pupils and give them good opportunities to self assess for themselves how well they have done. Teachers make excellent use of their specialist subject skills to stimulate learning and enjoyment. Art is a good example of this and the resultant exceptional achievements of pupils demonstrate the effectiveness of this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has been very carefully developed to meet the needs of the wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the school. The organisation of pupils into class groups does not limit opportunities to those available to a particular group. A very effective flexible approach enables all pupils to benefit from a rich and varied mix, including outstanding extra-curricular provision and individual programmes. The development of pupils' literacy skills has a very strong focus throughout the curriculum. Likewise, there is an equally strong focus on understanding healthy living and this is being extended further by a bid for the school to be granted Specialist Sports Status.

Extra-curricular activities are extensive and include the use of a wide range of facilities within the local community. This is very effective in encouraging pupils to become confident active members of the community. The achievement of national accreditation in the form of awards such as Silver Mark for Healthy schools, the Daily Telegraph School Sport Matters School of the Year 2008 and Sportsmark Gold is testament to the external recognition of the excellent

quality of the curriculum. A good quality sixth form curriculum has been rapidly developed, with plans to extend it further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The extensive support system within the school has been very effectively supplemented by excellent links with outside agencies such as the police, Connexions and the community psychiatric team. As a result high quality care is provided for each individual. Detailed behaviour management procedures are very effective and enable staff to recognise and reward good behaviour. Individual education plans are very well linked to pupils' statements and contain termly targets that offer clear guidance and excellent challenge to pupils. There are good opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and gain knowledge of how to improve. Pupils and their families benefit enormously from the support provided by the wide range of out-of-school activities that include holiday play schemes. The support service is much appreciated by mainstream schools. Mainstream senior staff report on how programmes for individual pupils have been very well established and enabled pupils to successfully remain in the mainstream and increase their achievements.

The school is a very safe environment. Extensive risk assessments for activities and individual pupils have been completed and all out of school visits are very carefully planned to ensure pupils' safety. Child protection procedures are very clear and all staff have received up to date training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The extremely high quality of leadership and management has led to the school being in the very strong position it is. The fact that so much has been achieved demonstrates the determination of leadership for the school to provide high quality provision. Staff training days have been very well planned to ensure skills have been shared and policies and procedures agreed. This has led to a strong level of consistency of approach throughout the school. The school has a very clear and accurate understanding of its strengths and improvement priorities. Excellent criteria have been established to judge pupils' rates of progress and detailed analysis undertaken of achievement data. This is being used very well to tackle any areas where pupils' achievements are not as good as in other areas. For example, girls' progress in reading is not quite as rapid as boys' and as a result, additional support is being provided, including purchasing books with a specific focus on the interests of girls. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding, through its excellent links with parents and outside agencies, an outstanding support service working very effectively in mainstream schools, and the wide-ranging use of the local community as a learning resource.

Governors have played a positive role in the development of the school. The chair and his immediate predecessor have overseen the evolution of the 'new school' with precision that has meant that pupils with very varying learning difficulties and/or disabilities have all benefited. Other governors all make valuable contributions, which include taking the lead in significant amounts of fundraising.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	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?	1	1
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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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**

26 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Round Oak School and Support Service, Warwick, CV34 6DX

Thank you for being so friendly when I came to visit the school. I really enjoyed my two days and came away with a very positive opinion of how well you and the staff are doing. My report judges the school and support service to be outstanding. I am sure, from the comments of those of you I met on the school council and those of you I had lunch with, that you will not be surprised by this.

I am very impressed with your new building and the way the staff have ensured all of you have settled in well. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and together with other senior staff and the governors shows a real determination to provide you with a very high standard of education. All the activities in and out of school are giving you all some wonderful experiences and these are leading to you all making really good progress. You are doing your bit by being regular attenders at school and accepting the chances to lead healthy lives through taking part in the many sports on offer and eating your 'five a day'.

The support service the school provides does very well supporting pupils in the mainstream and I know the mainstream staff appreciate this a lot. The school is doing a great deal to check how well you are doing. The two recommendations I have made to improve things are to carry out the plans it has to compare the progress you make with that of other boys and girls in similar schools and to provide more activities for sixth formers.

I am sure you will carry on enjoying being at school and I hope you are all successful in the next year in all the activities you take part in.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett Lead inspector