

Regency High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131532
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	328606
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	131
Sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathon Pearsal
Headteacher	Frank Steele
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Carnforth Drive Warndon Worcester WR4 9JL
Telephone number	01905 454828
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a new generic secondary-aged special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). A significant number of pupils have additional needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few of these are from families who speak English as an additional language. All pupils have a statement for their special educational needs. The school opened in September 2007 following a very significant re-organisation of the provision for special educational needs within the local authority. Pupils from three schools have been brought together into one school. The school is located on two sites, but the plan is to bring them all on to one site by September 2009. Since opening, there has been an extensive building programme going on to ensure that all the required facilities are located on one site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. There are some good features. The headteacher, with the support of an effective governing body, has ensured a smooth transition from three different schools into one school. This is no mean achievement and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this new school and the care it provides for their children. The headteacher's vision of creating a school in which barriers to learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are removed is shared by the dedicated staff team. Effective working between therapists and education staff promotes pupils' independence well. Feeding themselves with dignity, communicating choices and propelling their wheelchairs with confidence are significant strengths.

Achievement is satisfactory, but there are indicators of recently introduced strategies impacting on raising standards. For example, a reading scheme introduced has led to pupils with MLD and a few with SLD reading more fluently and for purpose. Many pupils with PMLD make good gains in communicating. Overall, there is a satisfactory match of the curriculum to pupils' needs. Accreditation opportunities are not sufficiently broad at Key Stage 4, but there is a plan to address this. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment data by subject leaders in developing the curriculum to raise the achievement of all pupils. There is good practice, particularly in the development of strategies and programmes for pupils with PMLD, but not all aspect or subject leaders confidently and consistently use data effectively yet in their development planning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but improving. Robust action taken by the headteacher has addressed the few pockets of weak teaching. The school acknowledges that assessment data is not consistently well used to inform lesson planning.

Attendance is satisfactory, but improving. However, there still remain some pupils with persistently poor attendance habits and these have an adverse impact on the overall figure. The personal development and well-being of pupils is good, as is their quality of care and support. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and there are appropriate plans in place to drive up standards. Operating on two sites for longer than anticipated at the time of the initial review, with significant additional costs, has resulted in a deficit budget. There is a detailed plan, agreed with the local authority, to claw this deficit back without impacting adversely on the quality of education for the pupils. Robust plans and decisive actions taken have, in a short space of time, already impacted positively on the quality of provision for pupils. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development and has brought together a dedicated and committed staff team. The capacity to bring about improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Students are equipped well for transition to the next step in their development as they move into adulthood. They accrue important and relevant lifeskills at a level appropriate to their capabilities. The curriculum is under review and there are plans to implement new courses to extend the accreditation opportunities within the sixth form. The current curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. The Team Enterprise Project, which includes all students in setting up a company with a bank account and shareholders, is a particular strength and develops students' lifeskills well. As much as possible is done to promote students' independence in terms of feeding, mobility and, for those capable of learning to shop, prepare a healthy meal and begin to travel safely and independently. Good work is done by therapists and education staff to develop students' communication skills. As their

communication skills improve, students become less frustrated and anxious. Their confidence and self-esteem begins to blossom. Work experience opportunities are good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory although they are constrained by the fact that sixth form students are currently taught on two different sites.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance to raise achievement, particularly that of persistent non-attenders.
- Ensure that assessment data is used consistently by subject leaders to better inform curriculum planning for all pupils' needs.
- Ensure that assessment data is used consistently in teaching to better inform lesson planning for all pupils' needs.
- Increase the accreditation opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 4 to improve the quality of provision for them and raise their achievement.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. All groups of pupils, except for a few with serious medical conditions and a few with poor attendance, make at least satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. Standards reached are well below the national average, reflecting the complexity of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In English, there are some pockets of good achievement. For example, pupils with MLD and a few pupils with SLD make rapid gains in reading as the result of the implementation of a good reading scheme by the school's leadership team. Effective programmes for pupils with PMLD enable them to make good progress in communication, through lifting their heads, pointing with their eyes and waiting for a response from adults. Progress in physical education (PE) is good. A few pupils with PMLD move their wheelchairs independently in and out of a zig-zagged line of cones. All groups of pupils are fully included in an extensive and exciting range of physical activities, which contribute to their physical fitness and enjoyment. However, an insufficient range of accredited courses for Key Stage 4 pupils prevent them from reaching their full potential. This is recognised by the school and there is a plan about to be implemented to address this issue. Effective joined-up working between therapists and education staff helps pupils to gain independence in feeding and mobility. The development of these important lifeskills are seen by parents and carers as significant achievements in the development of their children.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils enjoy school. Where lessons are challenging and fun, for example in music, pupils engage in learning with enthusiasm and excitement. Overall, they have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory, but improving. Pupils express their voice through a vibrant school council. Its members have gathered ideas from all classes on how to improve the school's external environment. Currently, the school's architects are feeding the pupils' ideas into their planning. Pupils improve their physical fitness through their enthusiastic participation in the all-inclusive PE programme, including regularly using the hydrotherapy pool. All pupils are included in food technology lessons. These promote their

understanding of the importance of making healthy food choices, for example through tasting healthy foods. The school works effectively to enable pupils to adopt safe lifestyles. For example, it has successfully enabled pupils with MLD to understand the dangers involved in communicating with strangers through chat rooms on the internet. Engagement in mini-enterprise projects and involvement in a Fairtrade café project give pupils opportunities to handle money, experience receiving change and develop important lifeskills at a level appropriate to their capability. Pupils trained as wheelchair pushers spontaneously move in to support pupils they see struggling with propelling their wheelchairs, but at the same time, in a dignified manner, ask whether their help is required. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school successfully raises pupils' awareness of cultural diversity through the celebrations of world faith festivals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to plan specific learning outcomes for pupils in all lessons. Some teachers record what pupils achieve in lessons, but do not make sufficient use of this information to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. Other teachers make effective use of what they know about pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding to plan to raise their achievement lesson by lesson. Teaching in a few lessons lacks a brisk pace and on these occasions, pupils' learning is slowed. There are pockets of good and outstanding practice in the teaching of PMLD pupils, characterised by an excellent match of activities and support for each pupil. Signing and switches are used effectively to support pupils in increasing their communication skills. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and so an increasing number of pupils are confident to take safe risks and this accelerates their learning. On occasions, there is good use of pupils' growing confidence to provide them with new opportunities to enhance their learning. However, such good practice is not consistently in place across the whole school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets pupils' needs. A detailed audit has been carried out across the curriculum and there is a robust action plan to improve its quality overall. However, subject leaders do not consistently make full use of available assessment data to inform detailed subject planning. Some specific programmes, such as the mini-enterprise projects in Key Stage 4, the reading programme tailored to raise achievement for pupils with MLD and SLD and the PE programmes, are good and contribute successfully to raising pupils' achievement. Provision for pupils with PMLD is good and contributes to their gains in communication and to their increased independent mobility. However, the range of accredited courses on offer at Key Stage 4 is limited. This impedes pupils, particularly pupils with MLD, from gaining accreditation across a broad range of subjects. Alternative curriculum programmes, such as the sports leadership course, are good. These programmes engage the interest of disaffected pupils. As they engage with these courses, their learning accelerates and their behaviour improves. Life skills are developed well through food technology, work experience opportunities and a good personal, social and health education programme. Enrichment activities are good. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' acquisition of teamwork skills and successfully build their confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

An effective partnership between health professionals and education staff ensure that pupils are safely positioned at all times, helping to remove barriers to learning for them. Good feeding plans develop pupils' skills in feeding as independently as possible and with dignity. A range of switches enable pupils to communicate real choices in lessons and to propel their own wheelchairs with confidence. Therapy is integral to pupils' learning activities. The school is on track this year to meet its challenging attendance target set by the local authority. However, it acknowledges that it is not yet being fully successful with a few persistent non-attenders. Transition arrangements are effective. Child protection procedures meet government guidelines. Risk assessments, including of pupils' medical and behavioural needs, are thorough and detailed. A system for tracking pupil progress over time has been put in place. A good start has been made in using data from this tracking to set challenging targets to raise pupils' awareness of their learning needs, but because the system is so new, it is too early to evaluate its full impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision which focuses on removing barriers to learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. His vision is shared by the governors and a dedicated staff team. Change has been managed well, but bringing three schools together into one is challenging and, as identified in the school's self-evaluation, this new school is still work in progress. Much energy has gone into the building issues and welding teachers and parents from different schools together. There is success in respect of these important issues. Accurate self-evaluation by senior leaders, including the analysis of relevant data, has been particularly effective in achieving improvement in a short space of time. For example, the new reading scheme has impacted positively on raising pupils' achievement. However, there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment data by subject leaders and in some instances, this limits their impact on the development of their subjects. The accreditation opportunities at Key Stage 4 are not sufficiently broad. Clear and realistic plans are in place to develop subject leadership and the curriculum with all priorities appropriately focusing on raising pupil achievement. A detailed audit has been conducted and a robust action plan is in place to enhance community cohesion for a pupil body with disabilities. It has started to impact positively and has already benefited pupils in raising their awareness of community issues locally, nationally and globally. Governance is satisfactory and, in a short space of time, governors from three different schools have merged to form a team committed to making this a good 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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

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

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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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**

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Regency High School, Worcester WR4 9JL

Inspectors enjoyed visiting your school and meeting with and talking with so many of you. The enthusiasm you have for work and your behaviour are good. It was great to see how you help each other, in particular how the trained wheelchair pushers assist other pupils.

We think that your school is satisfactory. You are cared for well. Your achievement is satisfactory as is your teaching. In a short space of time since opening as a new school just 16 months ago, improvements made have helped you to improve your communication skills, develop independence and make good gains in confidence and self-esteem.

We have asked your headteacher to do a number of things to improve the quality of education for all of you. We have asked him to improve the teaching you receive by making sure that all of your teachers make better use of what you can already do when they plan your lessons. We have also asked him to make sure that your subject leaders fully use information about what you can do when they are planning new courses and activities. In addition, we have asked him to improve the attendance so that all pupils have a chance to achieve well. Finally, we have asked him to improve the number of accredited courses those of you in Key Stage 4 can take so as to further raise your achievement.

We ask you to support your headteacher, staff and governors in making your new school a success and to all work together and learn together.

Yours faithfully

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector