

Lever Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131692
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	328634
Inspection date	24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Vickery
Headteacher	Mr C Roscoe
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
School address	Stocks Park Drive Horwich Bolton Lancashire BL6 6DE
Telephone number	01204 332666
Fax number	-

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small special school for secondary pupils who have a statement of special educational need because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils have additional learning difficulties over and above those that appear on their statement. These include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, specific literacy difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. Boys greatly outnumber girls. The great majority of pupils are White British and, for all, English is their home language. About a quarter of the pupils are children looked after by the local authority. The school maintains a teaching room in a nearby college and pupils receive some lessons there. Lever Park is at the final stage of deciding whether or not to accept Foundation Charitable trust status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents and pupils recognise that this is a good school. Many parents and carers make positive comments about the staff and thank them for what they have done for their children. Pupils say that the school has helped them to get both their education and their personal lives back on track.

Achievement is good. Most pupils entering the school have not benefited from their previous schooling. Their attainment is below or well below that expected for their age. However, they thrive in the positive climate that Lever Park provides and make good headway. By Key Stage 4 their attainment has risen and is close to average. In 2008, those leaving school gained GCSE grades C to G in up to nine subjects including mathematics, English and science.

Pupils make consistent progress because teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their pupils well. They set work well matched to their capabilities. Classroom teams provide all the help and support that pupils need. Lessons are planned to make the best use of learners' strengths. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and this, together with interesting work, helps pupils to behave well. The curriculum is good. National curriculum requirements are met. The individual needs and aspirations of each learner are taken into account. Interactive aspects of information and communication technology are used well to support active learning. There is a good range of practical vocational courses that support pupils' future work prospects. There are many good opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

Pupils' personal development is good. Any visitor notices a sign near the school that tells them that Lever Park has taken responsibility to keep the streets near the school clean and tidy. Pupils are proud of this initiative because they care for the environment. Attendance is satisfactory overall. Most pupils attend well. However, a very small number have unsatisfactory attendance. In some cases these pupils are unable to attend because of unusual social circumstances or because they are in Youth Custody. There is no education welfare officer attached to the school to deal with attendance issues. Pupils are strongly motivated by the points system that rewards good attitudes and behaviour. They take pleasure in their own success and that of others, applauding loudly when a fellow pupil gains maximum points. Pupils understand the requirements for good health. They eagerly use the school fitness suite and take part in a range of activities including wrestling, football and swimming. They are not fearful and believe bullying is unusual. They are confident staff will deal with it. They believe their voice is listened to and has led to school improvements.

The school offers its pupils good care, support and guidance. Established child protection arrangements are regularly reviewed. The needs of vulnerable pupils are recognised and steps are taken to ensure that they have the support that they need. Pupils know their personal and academic targets and are kept well informed about their progress.

Leadership and management are good. The new leadership team is agreed about the school's educational priorities. It is broadly accurate in its evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The progress of pupils is carefully tracked. However, a minority of pupils are slow learners because of the nature of their learning difficulties. While the school assesses the progress of these pupils, it does not compare their achievement with that of similar pupils elsewhere. This deprives it of information that would assist it in fully evaluating the overall effectiveness of its provision. Governors are supportive and active in holding the school to account. They ensure that resources are effectively used. The school has

improved well since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance.
- Compare the achievement of pupils who learn slowly with that of similar pupils elsewhere so as to provide more information to evaluate the effectiveness of provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points which are below and, occasionally, well below, average. All groups including boys and girls and children who are looked after by the local authority make good progress in the subjects they study and in the vocational courses that they take. They attain higher grades in GCSE examinations than might be predicted from their attainment on entry. Pupils' performance in science at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is particularly strong. Because of the nature of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a minority of pupils enter the school with literacy skills that are especially low. However, they respond to the individual teaching and support that they are given and begin to make gains at a good rate. Most progress from around Level 3, the standard expected of a nine year old, to Level 5 or 6, the standard of a GCSE D or C grade. The school has done much to address pupils' comparatively weak performance in English highlighted in the last report.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils learn to understand their feelings and to control their impulses well. This is evident in their attentive good behaviour in lessons and meetings and also in their calm demeanour during lunch and break-times. Pupils say that they enjoy school very much and more than one said that that in the future they would like to work in this school or one very much like it. The great majority of pupils come to school happily whenever they can. However, attendance, while better than at the last inspection, is satisfactory rather than good. Because this is a very small school the percentage attendance figures are significantly worsened by the prolonged absence of a very small number of pupils. Some of these remain on the school roll while detained under Youth Justice provision. The school does not presently have an education welfare officer and is limited in what it can do to address persistent absentees. Pupils understand the culturally diverse nature of society and respect the feelings and beliefs of others. They make a strong contribution to the community of the school and to its neighbourhood.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good progress made by pupils is brought about by effective teaching. Lessons are made interesting by extensive use of information and communication technology that captures the attention of pupils. Teachers plan effectively making full use of the information that they gain from assessments of the pupils' capabilities and attainments. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Most pupils learn best by 'seeing' and by 'doing' and attention is paid to this when lessons are planned and delivered. Classroom teams work very well together. Pupils are

given the help that they need. Special support assistants play a vital role in delivering individual learning programmes within lessons. Behaviour is managed effectively so that learning is not disrupted. Pupils are clearly told what they are expected to learn, how they are getting on and what they must do to further improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

These serve all learners well. The needs of individuals are understood and met. For example, the most vulnerable pupils who are unable to sustain the routine and expectations in general class groups are taught in a more intimate less formal style in 'nurture groups' until they find their feet. More generally, the school provides practical vocational courses that do much to meet the aspirations of pupils. The pupils very much enjoy their work in vehicle maintenance, bricklaying, horticulture, cookery, fitness, and hair and beauty. The school makes sure that the pupils know how to keep safe and stay fit and healthy. Pupils are given the opportunity to take part in residential visits and to take part in sports through local clubs with which the school has links.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school keeps its pupils safe and gives their health and protection the highest priority. Parents appreciate the care the school takes in keeping them informed and working with them. Teachers contact parents and carers by telephone at least once a week. Good liaison with outside agencies including social services, the youth offending team and the child and adolescent mental health service ensures that pupils at risk are identified early and that vulnerable children receive the help that they need. Pupils are much involved in setting challenging targets for academic improvement and personal development and they are given all the support and direction that they require to achieve these. They appreciate the special care that the school gives them such as providing them with a breakfast each day enriched with Omega III. The pupils believe that this helps them to concentrate and improve their self-control. The school reports that behaviour has improved and exclusions lessened since Omega III distribution started. This initiative indicates that the school is determined to leave no stone unturned in its quest to help its pupils flourish and succeed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, the post of deputy headteacher has been discontinued and a new senior management team made up of two assistant headteachers and the part-time special educational needs project manager has been put in place. As the school is aware, to gain the best advantage from the new arrangements the precise responsibilities of each of the team need to be clarified. There is a well established system for tracking the progress of pupils across the curriculum over time. This works well where pupils' attainments are broadly average or better. However, an increasing minority of pupils entering the school have very low attainments and are slow learners. Presently, the school does not make use of the assessments it makes of these pupils to compare their progress with that of similar pupils elsewhere. The lack of such a comparison deprives the school of information that could help it judge its performance more accurately. The school is committed to inclusion. It provides open access for all groups of

learners to the wide range of courses and opportunities it offers. Community cohesion is strongly promoted. Pupils are taught to avoid racism, to take on responsibilities and to work with others for the common good. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Governance is effective. The governing body has played a key role in bringing about improvements and is at the forefront of the current move to reposition the school as a Charitable Foundation Trust.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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
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**

Inspection of Lever Park School Stocks Park Drive, Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire, BL6 6DE

Thank you for being so polite when I inspected your school. I wish I could have spent more time talking to you but I found what you said to me memorable and very helpful.

You told me how much you enjoyed being at Lever Park and some of you said that one day you would like to work there. I thought that was a smashing compliment to the school. You enjoy your lessons, especially the practical ones and feel that the school has helped you back onto the right path. You trust the adults in the school and you are not afraid of being picked on or bullied. You are well informed about how to stay healthy and you enjoy the sports and other opportunities the school provides. I really liked the way you said that we should treat people of other races and with other beliefs as we would like to be treated ourselves.

I found that Lever Park is a good school that is led by a good headteacher and has a good staff that look after you and teach you well. In turn, you work hard, behave well, think of others beside yourselves and make good progress.

To make the school even better, I have asked the headteacher to try even harder to make sure everyone comes to school. You could help by always coming to school when you should.

I have also asked him to compare what is achieved by those whose difficulties cause them to learn slowly to what is achieved by boys and girls with similar difficulties in other schools. If this is done then the school will have better information on which to judge how well it is doing.