

# Maplewood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131915
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328656
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Greg Sorrell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	56
Sixth form	14
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	4
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jeanette Hyder
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Rumble
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Faulkner Way Downley High Wycombe HP13 5HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 525728
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 441546

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<b>Age group</b>	2–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Maplewood is a special school providing education for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Learners include children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), pupils aged 5–16 and students aged 16–19. Some of the EYFS children attend part time. The majority come from the surrounding urban and suburban communities, and a few from nearby local authorities. Approximately half of the pupils' backgrounds are White British with the remainder being mostly Asian British and other ethnic groups: most of the Asian British pupils receive additional language support due to being at an early stage of learning English. It has two off-site units, one of which provides a programme of education for 14–19-year-old pupils who have attended mostly the main site. The second unit provides a learning environment for pupils who have extremely challenging behaviour or who have specific needs that have not thus far been successfully met in other special school settings.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Maplewood is a good school that effectively demonstrates its commitment to wanting the best for all learners in terms of achievement and independence. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards reached are exceptionally low, but pupils achieve well in their studies. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and are characterised by brisk pace with many opportunities for first-hand experience. Learning objectives are mostly well targeted, but in a minority of cases they lack clarity and are difficult to measure successfully. Teaching assistants, some of whom have advanced qualifications, make an important contribution to the pupils' learning and achievement. The majority of pupils meet their challenging targets. Where they do not, the school promptly acts following a review of individual progress. The pupils enjoy coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing that they are safe and enjoy their lessons.

The school's monitoring and tracking of pupils' overall achievement is effective in ensuring that experiences for pupils are relevant and suitably challenging. As a result, the curriculum is good. After-school activities for most pupils are limited. The pupils make good progress in their personal development due to the well-integrated provision of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), support and guidance. The pupils enjoy coming to school, and relationships are good and sometimes excellent. Attendance and behaviour are good, and absences are usually due to medical reasons.

The overall quality of care, guidance and support provided is good. School procedures, including child protection, ensure that their well-being is appropriately safeguarded. Careers education and transition planning prepare them well for moving from one stage to the next. Most pupils receive a wide range of therapies to improve their access to the curriculum and their overall independence. Respect for the pupils' wishes, and dignity in their personal care, are strong features of daily life at school.

The quality of leadership and management is good due to the example set by the headteacher and his deputy. Managers' use of progress information has improved since the last inspection and they have an increasingly accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Good work is being done to review its curriculum for learners at the lower ends of pre-National Curriculum levels. The school works well with other agencies and with its partners, such as local schools and teacher training colleges, in pursuit of community cohesion and disability awareness. The governors give strong support on personnel, student welfare and finance issues to the main school and the 14-19 unit. However, their relationship with the off-site behavioural unit has not been formalised since it opened, thus limiting their impact on its subsequent development. However, in partnership with the local authority, they are in the final stages of agreeing full governance of this unit in order to improve the quality of that provision. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Students make good progress in all aspects of their learning due to the well-planned preparation they receive for transition to the sixth form and then for life beyond. The quality of education provided is good. They are encouraged to make their own choices and to develop independence alongside increasing economic awareness. Good teaching results in students making good

academic progress in relation to their individual targets, and taking accredited courses through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) modules. Some students achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In common with the school, the sixth form has good links with local schools and colleges, and all are well prepared for leaving school. The quality of leadership and management, supported by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, is good.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

As a result of good teaching, the children make good progress towards their learning goals in literacy, numeracy, physical development, communication and understanding the world around them. Assessment captures their small steps in learning and results in relevant programmes being planned. Children receive a high level of individual attention by caring and competent support staff. The staff know their children very well and demonstrate this by good quality planning and reporting. Where appropriate, children are given sensory experiences to enable good access to the curriculum. The teachers, support staff and therapists are skilled in creating many opportunities for communication and development of independence. The curriculum is personalised for each child's learning needs and, together with the emphasis on children's personal development, provides a solid foundation for life in the main school. The department is well led and managed.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- In conjunction with the local authority, improve the quality of the off-site behavioural provision by establishing clear, formal leadership, management and governance.
- Ensure that all learning objectives are as clear as the best examples in the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The range of ability within the whole school, including the units and the sixth form, is wide. It ranges from pre-National Curriculum levels (P levels) to lower levels of the National Curriculum. The overall attainment of learners is exceptionally low due to their special educational needs. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points, the pupils' achievements are good. They make good progress in meeting the targets in their individual education plans. At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, nationally recognised qualifications are achieved in ASDAN courses.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' good progress in personal development reflects the school's ethos and strong commitment to ensuring that all achieve their potential. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils respond enthusiastically to the emphasis on healthy lifestyles including the importance and enjoyment of physical activity. The school council for older pupils and students ensures that they know about democracy and the part they can play by voicing their opinions. Within the main school and the 14-19 unit all learners show respect for others, especially those who require mobility aids to get around. Within the behavioural unit, some opportunities are missed for pupils to work alongside their peers.

Pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. Behaviour and attendance are outstanding because pupils enjoy school so much and love to be there. Absences are invariably for medical reasons and notable improvements in attendance and attitudes to learning are evident in the behavioural unit. On arrival each morning, it is clear that pupils look forward to coming to school. Parents unanimously endorse this view.

All pupils and students make good progress in developing independent living skills through a wide range of curriculum activities and support. Examples range from feeding programmes for the developmentally young through to work-related learning and overnight residential experiences for those undertaking Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan appropriate and challenging lessons. Typically, lessons have a brisk pace and an essence of fun to engage learners of all abilities. Extensive opportunities are provided for practical experience. For example, in an outstanding lesson, the teacher combined music and rhythmic singing to develop pupils' literacy skills where they responded to images of well-known characters from books. All pupils were encouraged to take part and were well supported by teaching assistants. Sensory experiences are provided when appropriate, and good liaison with therapists ensures that these are relevant and appropriately assessed. In most cases, learning objectives and targets in individual education plans are sharp and easily measured. Occasionally, these objectives merely describe what the teacher intends to do rather than specifically what the pupils are expected to learn.

Relationships are very strong between learners and all staff. Teaching assistants are well deployed and assist teachers in assessing and recording each small step in a pupil's progress. Good attention is given to maximising access to the curriculum, for example in physical education, where a range of mobility aids are used to enable all to take part in physical activity. Teachers and assistants use a wide range of methods to ensure effective communication with learners, for example picture exchange, symbols, electronic communication devices, signing and sensory experiences. Depending upon the level of need, increasingly good use is made of assessment for learning, whereby pupils have benefited from opportunities to say how well they think they have done in lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school constantly reviews its curriculum to ensure it meets the diverse needs of all pupils and students. For example, the recent implementation of new planning processes for pupils working at lower P levels, largely through sensory experiences. Good account has been taken of national guidance in relation to both EYFS and the 14–19 age range. All programmes adopt a personalised approach to learning with an appropriate emphasis on learning for living in the community. The curriculum for pupils in the behavioural unit, where the National Curriculum has been disapplied, has a good impact on the pupils' attitudes to learning. However, these flexible programmes focus insufficiently on academic achievement, and progress can slow down. The manager of this unit has recently, and most appropriately, agreed to consider age-appropriate accreditation and to review the time at which the taught day starts.

Lunchtimes are very well used to support pupils' personal development and independence skills. For example, there are ample opportunities for pupils to socialise and, where appropriate, to benefit from supported feeding programmes. Governors are reviewing the potential for after-school activities, although some older pupils already enjoy a residential experience in support of their Duke of Edinburgh Award. The provision for pupils' development in PHSCE underpins much of the school's work and makes a substantial impact on all learners' personal development. Regular visits to the community and links with local schools and colleges demonstrate the school's commitment to community cohesion.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides highly valued care, guidance and support for its community. Therapies have a considerable impact on the pupils' abilities to access the curriculum. Good practice is often seen in class - for example, sessions are well managed to ensure that time out of lessons is minimised. The school's own investment in occupational therapy has a good impact on improving pupils' access to the curriculum, for example in the developing use of sensory resources. Relationships with other agencies are very effective and have an impact on academic subjects; for example, physiotherapists and occupational therapists liaise closely to plan physical education programmes. Staff ensure that pupils' personal care needs are met with appropriate dignity and respect. Staff work well with facilities for addressing pupils' personal care. Some of these are not in full use due to the unsuitable positioning of hoists. Significant preparation is undertaken to ensure smooth transition between classes and when leaving one part of the school for another, and ultimately the community. Annual reviews of statements of special educational needs keep parents well informed. Academic support and guidance is good. The school provides good support for parents, for example, developing signing skills to improve communication at home. In the behavioural unit, senior staff sometimes accompany parents when working with community agencies. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive; comments included: 'all staff are approachable...they ensure my child can take part in all the activities...it's a fantastic school...I feel that my child in the unit now has a chance'. A small minority of parents expressed the view that they would like more information about the work of therapists working with their children.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear vision for the school's development including that for the off-site 14-19 provision. He is most ably supported by his deputy headteacher, and together they lead by example. Other managers show the same commitment to providing the best inclusive education for all pupils and students. For example, monitoring and evaluation of progress leads to the effective modification of the curriculum to maximise achievement. Priorities in the development plan are appropriate. For example, the need for a review of assessment and target setting has been correctly identified in light of the pupils' complex and wide range of needs. The school's use of data to track pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection.

Staff are deployed well and their professional development is managed well. For example, ensuring staff expertise in communication and behavioural support is shared to enhance teachers' and assistants' skills in the classroom. Relationships with other agencies are well managed, and

all partners value the school's expertise in their specialist field. Governors provide excellent support for the school in relation to personnel, premises and finance. They could receive more information about whole-school curriculum initiatives, for example regarding the work to achieve Healthy School Status. Financial and safeguarding matters are well managed and appropriately audited.

Until recently, the school was involved in federation planning with a view to align special educational needs provision within the local area. These plans have been abandoned, and the school now has a clearer view of its own development. The assimilation of the off-site behavioural provision has also required substantial involvement of the school's governors and management time. Since the last inspection, the short-term provision for two pupils with challenging behaviour has grown to accommodate seven pupils of secondary age. Discussions about its status, purpose and future between governors and local authority are now at an advanced stage, with agreement in principle for full management and governance from the school's governing body. During the interim period, in liaison with the local authority, the school has supported the unit with advice and access to training on an informal basis. Although the unit's provision is satisfactory, it has not benefited fully from the good quality leadership, management, governance and clear direction evident in the main school and 14-19 provision.





## 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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
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?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	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**

17 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maplewood School, High Wycombe, HP13 5HB

Thanks for the warm welcome we received at your school last week. I am pleased to say that you go to a good school and it is clear that you enjoy your lessons. All the staff work very hard to help you learn. The quality of teaching is good and this helps you to do more things for yourself and communicate better with people around you. I think your behaviour and attendance are good. You make good progress and I know how much you enjoy physical education lessons at school and at the swimming pool. These activities help you to stay fit and healthy. Although I've only seen the plans and builders on site, I know the new hydrotherapy pool will be an excellent addition to your school.

You have really strong relationships with the staff and each other. The school supports your parents with advice that can help you at home, too.

I am asking your headteacher and governors to do a couple of things to help the school to be even better for everyone. One is to see that the off-site unit at Verney Avenue is as good as the rest of the school. The other is to make sure that all staff make it clear exactly what they want you to learn in all lessons.

Best wishes,

Yours faithfully

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector