

Langside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133740
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	328743
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	26
Sixth form	6
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hughes
Headteacher	John Ashby
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Langside Avenue Parkstone Poole BH12 5BN
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school provides for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils have very complex medical needs. The vast majority are unable to speak. All have statements of special educational needs. Attainment levels are well below the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. It has specialist status as a school for physical and sensory learning. Discussions are in place to merge with another special school, but governors continue to invest in the existing building to maximise benefit for the current pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Excellent cooperation between dedicated and committed therapists and education staff reduces barriers to learning for pupils with disabilities and severe medical needs. They work together to ensure the best possible positioning for pupils so that they have an opportunity to access learning and develop as much independence as possible. Feeding plans enable as many pupils as possible to move from being totally dependent on adults for feeding to feeding with support. Accessibility to a wide range of switches and electronic communication devices enables as many pupils as possible to begin to control their environment and communicate, with confidence, real choices such as 'I want... to drink.' The headteacher demonstrates inspirational leadership. His vision that every child will be as independent as possible and be included in society with dignity is shared by all staff, who work ceaselessly to fulfil that vision. Overwhelmingly, parents are delighted with what this school achieves for their children. A typical parent said, 'Our children make amazing progress due to the dedication and hard work of all staff.'

Achievement is outstanding. Progress is inevitably made by very small steps, given the pupils' profound learning difficulties. However, unless pupils have severe medical conditions, over time they gain confidence in communicating their needs through nods of the head, pointing with their eyes, and using switches and electronic communication aids. Significant gains towards independence in important life skills enable them to access more of the world with dignity. This reflects the outstanding teaching they receive and their access to the very best resources to remove barriers for them and so enable them to make informed and independent choices. Switches enable the most cognitively able to turn on a fan and the television without assistance.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, as is pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils are kept exceptionally safe. Careful attention to their nutritional needs coupled with working with each pupil in the hydrotherapy pool gives pupils excellent support in sustaining their muscle tone and posture. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. As a reflective school, careful thought has gone into developing a good action plan to promote community cohesion in the context of working with pupils with such complex needs. The school has an excellent capacity to sustain its high level of performance, although it does not sufficiently benchmark its overall performance against similar schools nationally.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. The curriculum is designed to maximize students' independence and to prepare them effectively for transition to the next step in their lives as adults.

Achievement in communication and independence is outstanding. Aided by excellent teaching and assisted by very high quality information and communication technology (ICT), students are enabled to begin to control the environment around them. For example, they turn the television on and off and operate a fan using adapted switches. They experience shopping and where possible are encouraged to buy something using their electronic communication aids. Thus, those capable make independent choices about what they want to drink and eat. Leadership and management of the sixth form provision are outstanding. There is an excellent coordinated multi-agency approach to ensure transition is smooth and that students are as well prepared as is possible for life beyond school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Meticulous planning ensures that the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are met exceptionally well. Careful observations of what interests the children and of the positions which elicit smiles from them are used very effectively to plan in order to accelerate their learning. Very effective partnership with parents means that there is regular dialogue about what objects and actions cause a lift of a head at home or in school and so parents and teachers work together to stimulate the children using the same objects and positioning techniques. Children progress, in small steps, from having no awareness of adults around them and not using their eyes to making eye contact and expressing a desire to be with somebody else. The curriculum is creative and the organization of the classroom is inspirational. Teaching is outstanding, as is the leadership and management of the provision for these children. The outdoor environment is used to develop children's communication and physical development, but because of the children's medical conditions, great care is built into its use, dependent on the weather. Every child has a detailed care plan and the use of the outdoor environment is risk assessed in the context of their complex medical needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Compare how well it does against similar schools nationally so as to share good practice and learn how to enhance even further the outstanding care and education it provides for its pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. All pupils, except for those with very severe medical conditions which adversely affect their development, make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points on entry. Assisted by a range of signs, symbols, switches and electronic communication aids, the vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress in communication. This is evident in their consistent responses through the lifting of their heads and pointing with their eyes when they hear a familiar voice. Very few pupils are able to write because of the severity of their needs, including very poor hand control. However, because of work carried out on the stretching and massaging of their hands, a few cognitively able pupils, with support, make marks on paper. The majority of pupils experience number by pointing to objects with their eyes and experiencing one being removed or added.

Very good positioning and modification of resources enable the independence of the majority of pupils to be maximised. Although they make very small step-by-step gains, their achievement is outstanding in relation to the severity of their needs. A few pupils move from being totally dependent on an adult for feeding to being able to partially feed themselves. A few pupils, assisted by electronic communication aids, are able to order a drink in a restaurant. Pupils with better vision out of one eye than the other are laid on their side in the sensory room so that they can respond to the fibre optics using the vision they have available to them. Often these pupils respond to the light stimulus. Pupils' social development and life skills are developed exceptionally well in the context of their capability. The most able pupils make outstanding progress in making their care needs, such as who they want to support them in using the bathroom, known to their carers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' great enjoyment is evident in their gorgeous smiles elicited by the headteacher when they arrive at school each morning. Unless sleeping because of a change in their medication or in serious regression, pupils engage with the rich stimulus provided for them through a wide range of sensory activities. Their response is overwhelmingly positive. Attendance is good, but a few pupils are absent for very lengthy periods because of the hospital treatments they require. Behaviour is outstanding. Glitches occur at times when pupils are in intense pain or experience frustration in communication because of deterioration in their condition. The school does everything it can to minimize these barriers. Through ensuring good positioning and improving pupils' posture by enabling pupils to raise their heads, the school enables pupils to be as healthy as possible in the school environment. Careful attention is paid to pupils' nutritional needs, for example through using chewing pouches to enable pupils to try different textures of foods. Pupils are enabled to move as independently as possible and in a dignified manner. For example, the location of switches on the head of chairs encourages pupils to lift their heads. All pupils experience and enjoy the sounds and atmosphere of being at a shop checkout and touching coins to enhance their experience of life skills. As far as possible pupils express their voice about who they want to administer medicines to them in a sensitive and dignified way. Pupils make an outstanding positive contribution to changing the attitude of able-bodied peers towards disability through being included in mainstream school settings. Within the limits imposed by their profound needs, pupils are extremely well prepared for their future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Lessons are thoroughly planned, with sensory activities matched very effectively to pupils' needs to accelerate their learning. An extensive range of sensory resources is used very well to enable pupils to attend with their eyes and communicate responses. Teachers and teaching assistants position themselves effectively and speak sensitively with pupils, making excellent eye contact with smiles on their faces to evoke responses. Often this results in pupils lifting their heads, increasing their vocalisation and on occasions waiting for a returned response. Modifications to equipment maximise independent mobility for pupils. Very effective use is made of the hydrotherapy pool to encourage pupils to have free and enjoyed movement of their limbs and to make them comfortable and as free from pain as is possible. Excellent use is made of assessment to inform planning lesson by lesson. This ensures that pupils receive meaningful experiences to enable them to move forward with very small steps of learning, but steps viewed by parents as mountainous.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Flexibly planned, the curriculum meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. Teachers are skilled at using the curriculum programmes to stimulate the pupils and evoke responses from them. Sensory integration programmes very significantly benefit the pupils. For example, for some there is a focus on a vibration stimulus, whilst for others there is emphasis on gentle pressure on their shoulders which makes them feel secure and successfully grasps their interest in the

world around them. Each pupil has a tailored programme to maximise attention and concentration. Therapy is integral to the curriculum, which has an excellent balance between meeting pupils' medical and educational needs. Very good knowledge of pupils' oral defensiveness is used very effectively to develop feeding programmes and improve pupils' independence and to encourage them to taste a wider range of foods. A recently improved sensory room is used very effectively to teach subjects such as geography to the whole class using excellent information and communication technology. Imaginative and creative approaches ensure that pupils experience a broad curriculum at a level which makes it a relevant experience for them. Modifications to furniture and skilful organization of resources matched to need remove barriers to learning. Computer programmes with a deep red image which stands out on a white background and high quality fibre optics in completely darkened rooms significantly benefit pupils with visual impairment. Very good inclusion opportunities and outstanding use of visitors significantly enhance pupils' learning

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Highly effective partnership between therapists and education staff minimizes or removes barriers for pupils so as to maximize their independence and mobility. Positioning and modifications to equipment enable, as far as it is possible, pupils to engage with and respond to a wide range of learning activities. Excellent induction procedures ensure pupils are settled in well when they start school and significantly benefit the whole family. Transition arrangements when pupils leave school are excellent. Child protection procedures meet government regulations. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed. Integral to care plans, they focus on the safety of the pupils and the adult team working with them. For example, regular checks are carried out on hoists used to lift pupils in and out of the hydrotherapy pool. This ensures that the pupils are safe, but also protects the staff from injuring their backs. Systems for tracking the very small steps of pupils' progress are excellent. Data is used with immediate effect to re-align pupils' targets and learning programmes to ensure all are challenged to realise their full potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership at all levels is excellent. Under the inspiration of the headteacher, all staff work ceaselessly to enable every pupil to be as independent as possible and to be equipped with every communication skill they can use so as to be included in society. The management of support to the whole family is a very strong feature of this successful school. Self-evaluation is thorough and detailed. Very good analysis informs clear and decisive actions which improve the quality of care and education for each pupil. Community cohesion has been thought through carefully and at a local level there has been a successful change of the mindset of able-bodied pupils towards pupils with disability as a result of excellent inclusion programmes. However, the school does not look carefully enough at how typical programmes for working with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are working in similar schools nationally, so as to learn from them. Governance is exceptionally effective. It supports and challenges the school's leadership. Recently it challenged some of the planned pupil outcomes in the school development plan. As a result they were improved to better benefit pupils.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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	2	
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	1
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?	2	
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 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Langside School, Poole BH12 5BN

We greatly enjoyed visiting your school. We are pleased that you appear to be so happy at school and that you are given every opportunity possible to communicate your needs. We saw how determined so many of you are to show how independent you can be.

We think your school is outstanding. You are challenged to do your very best. As a result you respond exceptionally well. Wherever possible you are given opportunities to have control over your environment. For example, using switches some of you can turn off the fan and turn on the television. Your achievements are outstanding, as is the teaching you receive. You are positioned so as to get the maximum benefit out of all the activities you are given.

We have asked your headteacher to have a careful look at how schools similar to your school are helping pupils to become independent and able to communicate choices about what they want. We have asked him to do this so that he can share with others all of the excellent things that go on in your school and learn from those schools some things that could be used to improve your education even more.

We would like to thank all staff and pupils for treating us as guests when we inspected your school.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector