

Landgate School, Bryn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134297
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	328882
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Hunt

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	46
Sixth form	3
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	Mrs Amanda Winstanley
Headteacher	Mrs Valda Pearson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Landgate Lane Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan WN4 0EP
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Age group	4–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a special school for pupils aged between 4 to 19 years who have a statement of special educational need because of their autism, severe learning difficulties and communication difficulties. Some pupils have additional medical and physical needs. The school first admitted pupils into Key Stage 4 and the sixth form (Post-16) in September 2008. Currently, 38% of pupils do not communicate through spoken language, 40% require some form of augmented communication and 22% rely on verbal communication. The nature of the learners' difficulties means they are working below age-related national expectations. The pupils come from all parts of Wigan and from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. Twenty-five per cent are entitled to a free school meal. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are children looked after by the local authority. The school provides an outreach service for schools in Wigan and has gained a Healthy Schools Award (2007). The school has experienced disruption in staffing during the last twelve months. The headteacher and four other staff left the school and there has been some significant staff illness. An interim consultant headteacher started in June 2008 and was in post at the time of the inspection. A permanent headteacher has been appointed and is due to start in January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Over the last twelve months the school has faced challenging circumstances. Because of staff illness and resignation, there have been changes in staffing and a lack of leadership. This has disrupted the continuity and quality of pupils' education. A small number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed some concern over the high level of disruption, which they believe has had a detrimental effect on the progress of their children. The school is not as effective as it should be and does not meet the needs of all its pupils. Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is partly due to weak teaching and inconsistencies in the quality of planning and partly because there has not been an effective and consistent system for setting and reviewing pupils' individual targets for learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some good elements. For example, pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of school by their good attendance. They say they feel safe and bullying is dealt with well. Pupils make good progress in staying healthy and they behave well in lessons. Despite the strengths in the way the school looks after pupils' emotional and communication needs, the quality of care, guidance and support is only satisfactory overall. This is because the school does not have an accurate overall picture of pupils' academic progress. It cannot demonstrate how well pupils are doing because systems for judging achievement are only just coming into place.

The quality of teaching is inadequate overall, but varies. Some good teaching in science and communication skills was observed during the inspection but too much teaching is barely satisfactory. Its quality is not good enough to overcome pupils' underachievement. Often, resources and work set are not appropriate for the ages and abilities of the pupils. Lessons are not planned well enough to ensure pupils' learning builds progressively. Although there are a good number of support staff in lessons, they are not always used to the best effect to support pupils learning. The curriculum is inadequate. Over the last three months the school has started to develop schemes of work that are beginning to engage pupils' interests. However, the steps taken so far have not had time to increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise their achievement.

Leadership and management, including governance, are inadequate. The school does not meet all of its statutory requirements, particularly in ensuring pupils' equality of opportunity to succeed and in promoting community cohesion. Since the end of June the consultant headteacher has worked hard with staff to put new management systems into place. However, the significant period of time in which the school has been without clear direction has left a legacy of weaknesses and underachievement that will take time to rectify. School development planning is only now beginning to focus on academic achievement. Consequently, although the school has established satisfactory procedures to support and care for pupils, key areas such as assessment and the monitoring of pupils' academic progress, are inadequate. The interruption of leadership has made it difficult to establish and embed secure systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school. The school, therefore, has an

inaccurate view of its effectiveness and its capacity to improve is inadequate. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 4

Post-16 provision opened in September 2008. All students follow a practical skills and work based curriculum through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Teaching and learning are inadequate because teachers have insufficient information about the skills and knowledge that the students have already gained. As a result, students' learning does not move onto the next stage because activities are not planned to build on this earlier learning. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and they enjoy the practical work and the focus on skills for later life and work that this new course brings. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Students receive satisfactory pastoral support and safeguarding requirements are met. However, the lack of systems to monitor the provision and to assess students' progress means that work cannot be matched or adjusted to meet their needs. The school cannot measure the effectiveness of its provision.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

There were no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children on the roll of the school at the time of this inspection and there have been no referrals recently. Whilst there is a fully equipped outdoor area, and general resources are in place, the classroom designated for EYFS is unused. When EYFS children attended the school, early learning goals were set. However, the systems in place to check on children's achievement are not accurate enough, particularly in relation to their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all statutory requirements are met.
- Establish systems so that leaders can monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.
- Ensure all staff throughout the school use a common system, which includes individual learning targets, to assess pupils' attainment and track their progress.
- Ensure teachers plan lessons which build on pupils' previous learning in order to raise achievement.
- Provide all pupils and students with resources and materials appropriate to their ages.
- Develop a curriculum to meet the needs and interests of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement and their progress are inadequate overall. Progress is too variable and is very much dependent upon the quality of the teaching and planning taking place in individual lessons. In the more successful lessons seen, pupils' progress was good, but this is not consistent across the school. School records only show academic achievement for pupils over a period of three months in the core skills of English, mathematics and science, but even here, the measures are not yet sharp enough to assess progress accurately. There is a lack of evidence collected by the school to show that all pupils are progressing well enough. Inconsistencies in assessment have begun to be rectified recently but have not had time to bear fruit. Pupils with specific

communication difficulties make some progress because the aids and activities provided help them to improve their skills in this area. The process of setting subject-specific individual learning targets is relatively new to the school. Pupils have individual targets for numeracy and literacy, but these are insufficiently precise and the pupils do not know what they are or how to meet them. As a result, these targets are ineffective in raising pupils' achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' attendance is good because they enjoy coming to school. Pupils' generally behave well in classrooms because teachers manage their behaviour effectively. However, occasionally, support staff do not always intervene rapidly enough to nip any inappropriate behaviour in the bud. Pupils say that when there are any incidences of bullying or fighting in the playground it is dealt with very quickly and that they feel safe. They benefit from the school's Healthy School status and participate well in physical activities such as swimming. They extend their physical and independence skills in outdoor and adventurous activities during residential trips to the Lake District. Pupils have good contacts with the immediate community, for example, through taking 'Thanksgiving' gifts to local elderly peoples' homes, but their knowledge of the wider community and their understanding of citizenship are less developed. However, pupils do relate well to each other and to adults in school and feel they belong to their school community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Some elements of spiritual and cultural understanding have improved since the last inspection. There are assemblies and visitors to school, for example, Indian dancers. Pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the world of work because the majority of them lack opportunities to achieve as well as they can in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Staff do not plan lessons well enough to enable pupils to build on their previous learning and to ensure they make sufficient progress. Training for staff on planning effective lessons has begun recently but the impact of this is not yet sufficiently evident in practice. Pupils' individual plans for learning and behaviour are not good enough to guide their learning and to raise their achievement. The teaching of communication skills to those pupils who do use spoken language is good, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise and use these skills in the other subjects of the curriculum. A high number of support staff are present in lessons, but they are often not deployed effectively to give much needed help and support for pupils' academic work. Despite these significant weaknesses in teaching, relationships between pupils and staff are good and teachers use praise well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate in meeting the needs and interests of all the pupils. A whole school curriculum has only recently been developed; schemes of work for English, mathematics and science have been updated and planning for other subjects is at an early stage. Since September, under the direction of the consultant headteacher, staff have been introducing a 'themed curriculum', but it is too soon for this to have significantly improved pupils' experiences

and learning. However, some visits to places of interest are starting to enrich this new approach. Pupils have also benefited from visitors into school, including wrestlers who involved them in understanding and experiencing the skills of this contact sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are satisfactory overall. Requirements for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils are met. There was a very good response from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire. They feel their children are well cared for, despite the concerns of a few about the disruption caused by the high rate of staff absences and the school's lack of a permanent headteacher for twelve months. In addition, a small number of concerns were expressed by parents and carers about a lack of communication from school to home in relation to their child's pastoral and academic needs. The consultant headteacher has started to rectify this with a regular newsletter and the school does use home/school diaries to keep parents and carers up to date with day-to-day issues. The quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make have not been monitored and assessed sufficiently well for staff to gain a clear understanding of the next steps required in their learning. In addition, pupils are not involved in understanding how well they are doing in most subjects. However, pupils are involved in their annual reviews. Their communication and autistic behaviours are closely monitored and support is given to improve these areas. At the present time there are no separate reports to parents on their child's progress, although this is included in the annual review process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership, management and governance are inadequate. Over the last twelve months the school has had no substantive headteacher, until the consultant headteacher joined the school at the end of June 2008. High staff absences and changes to the position of chair of governors have contributed to the unstable position. Since the consultant headteacher arrived there has been improvement but the systems put into place have not had sufficient time to be consolidated or effective. For example, not all subjects have a curriculum leader to develop them effectively and performance management arrangements have only recently been re-established. Governors support the school but have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met. For example, pupils' equality of opportunity to succeed is not secure because there is no race, disability or gender policy in place. Also, governors do not meet the requirements for promoting community cohesion effectively nor are parents and carers kept fully up to date with all information to which they are entitled.

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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?	4	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	IE ²	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	IE ²	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	4	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4	

Achievement and standards

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

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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I inspected your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to the group who met me at lunchtime and it was good finding out about the things you are doing. It was very useful to know what you think about your school.

There are some things that are good about your school. These include:

- your good behaviour
- the good relationships that you have with staff
- your good attendance
- the way you learn to stay healthy.

However, I found that your school is not providing an acceptable standard of education for you and so it requires 'special measures'. This means that your school will receive extra help to improve it so that you can make better progress. Inspectors will visit regularly to check how the school is improving. There are many things which need to be put right to make it better. The six main things are: -

- leaders need to make sure that the school does all the things the law says it should;
- leaders need to check how well the teaching is helping you to make progress;
- teachers need to assess your work and check your progress carefully. They should make sure you all know your targets so that you know exactly how to improve your work;
- teachers should make sure that all of your lessons help you to build on what you know and can do already;
- staff should provide you with books and learning materials suitable for your age;
- the activities you do should be interesting for you and help you to make better progress.

I hope you carry on enjoying school and continue to help your teachers all you can. I wish you all the very best for the future.