

# Springwell Community Special School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135275
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	329070
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rosemary Eaton

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	55
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Sanderson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms J Thirkell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	St Helen's Boulevard Carlton Road Barnsley South Yorkshire S71 2AY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01226 206683
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

Springwell opened in January 2008. It caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Additionally, most pupils have moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Before joining the school, pupils' education has typically been disrupted by low levels of attendance or exclusion from previous schools. Many are from disadvantaged backgrounds. All pupils are White British and there are only a few girls on roll. A pupil referral unit and associated services share the school's site and building. Springwell's headteacher leads this provision also. New accommodation for the school is due to be built on the existing site.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils progress well in their learning because their behaviour, attitudes and attendance improve, enabling them to benefit from the good teaching and curriculum provided.

Pupils' personal development is good. They show that they enjoy school greatly by being very willing to join in lessons and activities such as after-school clubs and to try hard to improve their work and behaviour. Working relationships with staff are warm and mutually respectful. Pupils comment that they like their teachers and know that they will look after them. In fact, the school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Meticulous attention to detail characterises the arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Extremely close and effective links with a wide range of agencies and professionals enhance the work of school staff. For example, joint efforts by the school and the education welfare officer have successfully helped to improve attendance and this is now above average. A number of parents have noted that their children feel secure and confident in school.

Springwell is predominantly a calm and purposeful learning environment. Most pupils respond very positively to the school's efforts to improve their behaviour. As a result, behaviour is good and pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to sustain extended work placements and complete accredited courses. After leaving school, they frequently move on to training or employment, demonstrating that they are prepared well for this next stage in their lives.

Academic standards are exceptionally low. This is because many pupils have to overcome difficulties with learning and all have had disruptions to their education before joining the school. However, pupils achieve well, in line with the quality of teaching. Lessons take good account of pupils' needs, offering plenty of practical activities and often incorporating social and emotional aspects of learning. A structured literacy programme contributes to the good progress pupils make in English. Leaders' analysis of assessment information has revealed that although progress in mathematics is also good overall, it is often slower in number and calculation.

Pupils are well informed about the constituents of a healthy lifestyle. They are mostly enthusiastic about taking part in physical activity and know about the adverse effects of smoking, alcohol and illegal drugs. This awareness is often gained through the medium of drama, which is regularly integrated with personal, social, health and citizenship lessons. By improvising scenarios, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and to appreciate the consequences of anti-social behaviour to themselves and others. Pupils in Year 7 urged a teacher, acting out the role of a parent in the throes of addiction, to seek help for the sake of her children. Learning to consider others is a key element in enabling pupils to make a good contribution to the school and local community. A group of pupils in Years 10 and 11 worked together to clear a stretch of canal, improving the environment and amenities for the public.

Leadership and management are good overall. However, the headteacher's leadership is first-rate and ensures that staff share her clear vision and extremely high aspirations. This common purpose has helped the school to develop rapidly and contributes to its good capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is thorough and rigorous, and provides an accurate view of where the school is particularly successful and where more development is needed. Currently, senior leaders take much of the responsibility for monitoring performance, for example checking the

quality of teaching and learning. Other leaders tend to receive information rather than gathering and evaluating it for themselves.

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

- Improve pupils' progress in the number and calculation strand of mathematics.
- Extend responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance beyond the senior leadership team.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good progress throughout the school is particularly evident in writing. They learn systematically, organise their ideas through discussion, and are motivated by relevant tasks. Progress in the number and calculation element of mathematics tends to be slower and the school is beginning to tackle this comparative weakness. Pupils make good progress in developing positive attitudes to learning and becoming confident in their ability to learn. They regularly use information and communication technology very effectively to help them learn. Nearly all pupils in Key Stage 4 gain accreditation for all aspects of their learning. Their successes include Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Youth Awards at bronze or silver level, the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, and adult literacy and numeracy awards. The current Year 11 pupils are on line to meet their challenging accreditation targets. Most are expected to gain at least one pass at the equivalent of GCSE level. A few higher-attaining pupils make such good progress in learning and personal development that they spend some of their time in mainstream schools. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, with enhanced provision for those who find their work particularly difficult. The very small number of girls make progress equally as good as that of boys.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils recognise that their behaviour improves well. From time to time, individuals are excluded to maintain the school's safe learning environment. However, the rate of exclusion has fallen significantly during the short time the school has been open. Records show that incidents of bullying are uncommon and pupils confirm this. They are quite clear what to do if they do have concerns. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils make good progress in learning to tolerate differences, for example by considering how individuals might feel if they were bullied because of the colour of their skin. A number of local and national charities benefit from pupils' efforts to raise funds. Pupils are often very willing to contribute to the school community, for example by leading assemblies and sharing their ideas about how to improve school meals. However, opportunities to take on formal responsibilities and influence decisions about school life could be stronger. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives, for example by developing positive attitudes to work and attendance and their ability to work as part as a team.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils explain, perceptively, that they learn well because their work is at the right level and teachers do not rush them. Lessons are planned carefully. Typically, a sequence of short duration activities helps pupils to develop and apply knowledge, skills and understanding in interesting ways. They often learn by making things, playing games or acting out roles, because teachers know that practical methods are the ones that best suit most of the pupils. Support staff regularly make significant contributions to teaching and learning. For example, like the teachers, they use questions well to check pupils' understanding, encourage thinking, and provide good opportunities for them to express their ideas and feelings. Staff usually manage pupils' behaviour very effectively so disruptions to lessons are minimal. Pupils often work together in pairs, for example sharing reading together during lessons. Occasionally, opportunities are missed for them to help each other learn in this way. Staff frequently make video recordings of pupils' work, adding to the wide range of evidence about their learning and enabling pupils to be involved in reviewing their own progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

A particular strength of the curriculum is the way in which pupils' individual needs are met. For example, excellent partnerships with an impressive range of providers enable each Key Stage 4 pupil to construct a highly personal timetable. These pupils choose work-based learning in diverse fields such as construction, beauty, horticulture and football, which runs alongside courses in key areas like literacy and numeracy. At Key Stages 2 and 3, the curriculum links together subjects through themes, for example migration. These make learning interesting and relevant and provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to purposeful activities. The curriculum in mathematics is not as tightly structured or effective as the successful literacy programme. Learning and personal development are enriched well by a good range of popular clubs including sport, cooking and music. Pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, take part in well-planned visits, for example to Conisbrough Castle, bringing learning to life and allowing pupils to practise social and communication skills. Days and weeks are set aside to focus attention on topics such as Africa or anti-bullying. Visitors frequently enhance both special events and everyday activities. For example, police officers take part in lessons, joining in discussions about highly relevant issues, including Internet safety, domestic violence and knife crime.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Care and pastoral support are outstanding. The inclusion support manager brings considerable expertise to her oversight of the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Current government requirements are met. Staff are comprehensively trained in crucial areas such as child protection procedures and an approved system for intervening to manage challenging behaviour. Incidents are recorded carefully, monitored by senior staff and followed up when necessary by referrals to other agencies. The parent support adviser offers courses for parents to guide them in helping their children at home and encourages and helps them to keep appointments with support agencies. Daily breakfast in classrooms provides a warm and healthy welcome and an

opportunity for pupils to discuss any issues and get ready to learn. The range of therapy available in school includes art, play and drama, offering opportunities for pupils to come to terms with problems. Academic guidance is good. Staff talk to pupils frequently about how they can improve and their individual targets are readily available to remind them. Pupils regularly evaluate their own learning and comment on the contributions made by others.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The members of the senior leadership team fulfil significant roles, entirely support the headteacher's vision, and are helping to develop the leadership skills of other staff. For example, the deputy headteacher steers the curriculum leadership group, encouraging and supporting innovation. In the main, senior leaders conduct both the analysis of whole-school performance data and classroom observations. Other staff with leadership roles are not all sufficiently involved. The school is effective in promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged. For example, specialist singing lessons enable the very few girls in Key Stage 3 to pursue an interest and spend time together. With determination, the headteacher leads the drive towards community cohesion and the school performs this role well. Already, staff work successfully with families, share their expertise with other schools, and have recently established a link with a London school whose pupils are from many different ethnic backgrounds. Other schools and agencies in the local authority value Springwell's work. Governance is good. Governors bring a wealth of relevant expertise and are well informed. A small strategic committee maintains oversight of issues such as the new build. Governors help to ensure that the school provides good value for money.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

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<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
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	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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
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**

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting you. Special thanks go to the group of pupils who spent time talking with me. They told me how much they liked Springwell and I can see why. It is a good school.

The school helps you to improve your behaviour and you behave well nearly all the time. You should be really proud of this. It helps everyone to feel safe in school, but another reason for feeling safe is the outstanding care taken of you by the staff. The school provides you with plenty of interesting things to do. I was very impressed with the work you do in drama. This is helping you to develop in many ways, for example by learning about the consequences of the things people do.

You make good progress and achieve well. The oldest pupils gain accreditation to show future employers what they have achieved. You make especially good progress in writing but the school has noticed that you don't learn as fast in number and calculation. I have asked the school to help you make better progress in this aspect of mathematics.

Your headteacher and the senior staff keep a very close eye on how well the school is getting on. I would like other staff to help with this work. All the adults in school are working very hard to keep improving Springwell, so you have the best possible education. I would like to send them and each one of you my very best wishes for the future.