

Cloughwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 111502

Local Authority Cheshire West and Chester

Inspection number 337692

Inspection dates3-4 March 2010Reporting inspectorSonja Oyen HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school Special

School category Community special

Age range of pupils9-16Gender of pupilsBoysNumber of pupils on the school roll52

Appropriate authority The governing body

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 Age group
 9-16

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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

Social care inspector

Cloughwood Special School SC006625 Michelle Moss

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, an additional inspector and a social care inspector. They visited 14 lessons taught by 10 members of teaching and support staff, a school assembly, three staff/student briefings, a Golden Time (reward) period for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the Wednesday games afternoon and activities after the end of the school day. They held meetings with the vice-chair of governors, the governor responsible for safeguarding, the headteacher, the head of care, the student services' coordinator, other teaching and care staff, boarding students, pupils from Years 5 and 6 and members of the school council. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the development plan, records of students' progress and care, questionnaires from 27 members of staff, 32 students, 10 students who board, and 14 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- are all students making enough progress academically and socially?
- why do some students do particularly well in science?
- how innovative is the curriculum?
- how well does the school ensure that all students do the best they can?
- is improvement planning focused enough on the aspects that will make a difference to the students?

Information about the school

This residential school has places for 60 boys who have a statement of special educational needs, reflecting their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. There are currently 52 boys on roll: eight in a class of mixed Years 5 and 6, 27 at Key Stage 3 and 17 at Key Stage 4. Twelve students board during the week. The others come to school by taxi from different parts of Cheshire, although some occasionally stay overnight to participate in the school's extended provision. All students are White British and all are eligible for a free school meal. Eight students are in the care of the local authority.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Cloughwood continues to provide good quality education, care and boarding provision. Students new to the school describe it as 'fantastic' because it is taking account of their needs. While not all students say they enjoy school, they do generally feel safe and cared for. Students commented that staff are "good at asking us how we feel and how they can help". Boarders feel well looked after and like the choice in sporting and social activities. Parents and carers acknowledge the school's success in helping them and their children to cope. As some commented, "I couldn't ask for a better school for my son". Such positive comments reflect the school's success in serving the students well.

The overall good quality of the provision, especially pastoral care, accounts for the strides made in students' personal and academic progress. Given the nature of their difficulties, students' overall behaviour in, around and outside school is good. No student has been excluded in the last three years. School councillors commented that, 'Everyone gets on pretty well'. Younger students said that the school is helping them to recognise their tipping points and to manage their anger. Many openly agree that their and others' behaviour could be better. Not all students cope well with changes in routine and there were a few incidents during the inspection of unacceptable language and behaviour. However, no lesson was curtailed or disrupted for long; staff helped students to calm down and to re-engage in the sessions. The skilful work of many teaching assistants was a key factor; their calm, encouraging support and intervention often ensured that lessons ran relatively smoothly. Students' attention was especially caught by practical activities. Although some students struggled with reading, writing and number, they completed written tasks. Learning is taking place, but teachers' expectations of what students can do are not always high enough and many students overly rely on adults to direct their learning. The teaching is not always tailored specifically to individual needs and some learning is insecure. Similarly, in briefings and reviews, teachers and care staff do not foster well enough students' skills in reflecting on their progress. Teaching overall is satisfactory with several common strong aspects that support students' good progress over time.

Standards, though low in comparison with mainstream schools, are rising. Students are gaining passes at GCSE and all students who left in the summer of 2009 have taken up college places. This often represents huge personal achievement from low starting points. Those students in the care of the local authority and those who board, often make good progress because of the stability the school offers.

Strong leadership has moved the school on since the last inspection which took it out of special measures. Widening partnerships have increased the range of learning pathways and support programmes available to students. Governors and key staff share a realistic

view of what the school offers; they recognise that for some staff the care of students has overshadowed moves to raise educational achievement. Current development plans cover many of the areas identified for improvement in this report. However, some plans lack clear success criteria to enable the school to measure and evaluate the difference made for students. Not all national minimum standards in social care are met, as there are shortfalls in the detail in paperwork and in some procedures. This reflects gaps in staff's awareness of current best practice. Work has already started to iron out some of the inconsistencies in teaching, to make all procedures watertight and to make better use of the wide range of information on students' progress to decide how resources may ensure all students do well. Good use is being made of available funds to refurbish the accommodation and to improve outdoor facilities. Improving results, rising attendance, a widening curriculum, students' willingness to learn, all point to the positive impact of steps taken and to the school's good capacity to move confidently into its next phase of development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so that all is at least good, by:
 - raising staff's expectations of what students can do
 - breaking down the intended learning into manageable steps
 - demonstrating and rehearsing the steps in learning
 - ensuring that all staff draw on a wider bank of questions and strategies to probe and check students' understanding.
- Foster students' independence as learners, by:
 - using available information about students' progress to individualise their learning
 - ensuring that students are even more involved in reviewing their own progress and are given ownership of targets
 - ensuring that care and education staff work with students who board to agree targets relating to all aspects of their time in school.
- Sharpen the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - analysing critically the logs, data and other evidence for patterns, trends and 'hot spots' to take preventative and supportive action
 - tightening administrative systems and procedures
 - identifying specific, quantifiable outcomes for students in the school's development plans
 - ensuring that all care and teaching staff have the skills and up-to-date knowledge needed to carry out fully their roles and responsibilities.

The strengths in students' personal development and good learning result in good outcomes overall. Students start at Cloughwood having found learning difficult in mainstream schools. Some are close to the standard expected for their age while others are years behind. For many students, progress is in fits-and-starts, reflecting personal situations. Several said how boarding had allowed them to put home problems on one side and, with the help of the adults, 'do more than in mainstream'.

Students benefit from the focus on helping them to cope with their behaviour and life when they leave. Final year students had prepared and dressed smartly for their mock job interviews and were pleased with their feedback. Students form friendships and show developing tolerance and acceptance of how others think and behave. They feel safe because the adults treat them with respect and act to deal with emotional problems, sometimes involving restraint because of risk to others and themselves. Students say that there is occasional bullying; it was not evident during the inspection. Most say that they enjoy school and almost half have attendance rates well over 90%. While recognising the importance of drinking water, eating the right food and exercise to stay healthy, they find the school food 'too healthy' and boarders like the chance to cook their own. All take part in many sporting activities and appreciate that this gives a chance to 'let off steam'. Students feel part of the school family and, through the school council, are involved in making decisions about provision.

In lessons, although students generally listened, new learning was not always secure. This is because of weaker aspects in the teaching and students' variable level of application. Students followed the routines, such as queuing up outside the room, and usually did as they were asked, although there was reluctance and comment from some when asked to record work. When challenged and motivated, students can do well – some of the work in books, folders and on public display was neatly presented and showed clearly how students had tried hard to produce good work.

The school's own data shows that the majority of students meet or exceed their targets and often make more than expected progress in a year and key stage. Good provision for the students at Key Stage 2, results in many hitting the level expected for their age, and some doing even better in mathematics and science. This relative subject strength reflects students' preference for practical subjects and the chance to improve GCSE grades in modular work. In 2009, the school celebrated good GCSE passes in art, mathematics, physical education and speaking and listening, and a marked rise to 70% in overall passes. The school's evidence points to the potential for students to do even better in 2010.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2	
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2	
Pupils' behaviour		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being		
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	

How effective is the provision?

Staff really know each student. They are quick to sense mood swings and to act to deflect and deal with problems. They ensure that individual students have the necessary support to develop their skills in reading, writing and number and also counsel and advise them in how to manage their emotions and realise the impact of their actions. Students' progress is reviewed several times each day and parents and carers are informed about steps forward and back.

Some weaker elements in teaching limit learning. Some students, especially the youngest, benefit from consistently good teaching. A teacher's repetition of expectations, close questioning, structured step-by-step teaching, relating of new information to previous learning, and skilful handling of students' behaviour, ensured that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 moved on in their understanding of solids, liquids and gases. Given that a few had behaved poorly for short periods, this was a notable success and was partly attributable to the very effective teamwork between teacher and teaching assistants. Such high quality support typifies much across the school and plays a large part in keeping students on track in lessons. This is not always matched by a strong emphasis on individualising learning and structuring the pace, content and method to ensure all students understand and can deal with the challenge.

Improvements to the curriculum and resources have enhanced the choices and opportunities for students. Key Stage 4 students are studying up to eight GCSE subjects, following some college courses and taking up placements in a range of settings. Moves to align courses with accreditation are ensuring students gain awards that enhance their opportunities to gain employment, or enter training or further education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, governors and senior leaders are aware that there is some way to go for Cloughwood to be the desired centre of excellence. They are looking at ways to increase the school's links with others, locally and further afield, and thus widen students' social world and heighten their awareness of different cultures and values. The recent visit of a professional footballer helped students to discuss the issue of racism in sport. Until recently, governance has lacked critical edge, especially in ensuring that the school kept abreast of best practice and changes in requirements. While all key safeguarding educational requirements are met, some of the national minimum standards of social care are not. This has not detracted from the effective links between the school, local authority, support agencies, families and carers to ensure that students profit from their time in school. A good example is the positive impact of occasional boarding for some students at a time of family crisis. Management decisions about teaching appointments, use of resources and curriculum choices are well founded and underlie the good value achieved. Nevertheless, chances are missed to draw on data and evidence related to students' performance and progress to pinpoint exactly how well the school enables every student to have an equal chance to do well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3	

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Boarding provision

This announced inspection found that the school is meeting the majority of the national minimum standards and that the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. Outcomes for students using the boarding provision are overall enhanced in most aspects of their care.

Areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection have all been addressed. As a consequence of these improvements, students have better detailed health plans that are utilised by care staff to help keep them healthy. Care staff receive increased levels of supervision that is reflective of their experience and needs. A bound book is available to staff for recording all measures of control used in support of students' behaviour. The book also provides students with an opportunity to write their views and sign their name against them.

Care staff are highly committed to the welfare of students and are supportive of the school's management. There are strong links with a number of external stakeholders and partners that help to promote the health and well-being of students. There are good arrangements for storing, recording and monitoring of medication, to ensure students' welfare is not compromised. Students are afforded opportunities to promote their social inclusion. For example, they are encouraged and supported to participate in social clubs and sports activities that enhance their physical well-being. Menus are well planned in conjunction with the students, with a number of choices available. This includes wholesome food options that help to keep students healthy.

The care staff ensure that every student receives individual support and care that is reflective of their needs and situation. Students have the opportunity to make choices, form friendships and enhance independence to maximise their health and well-being. Care staff treat students with courtesy, honesty and respect, which is mirrored by a mutual respect shown by students. The care staff support students fairly on the basis of need and do not discriminate against them based on their race, cultural heritage or religious beliefs.

Students say they feel safe at the school and are very supportive of each other. The care staff are sensitive to the promotion of students' privacy and address without delay any anti-social behaviour, including bullying in a robust way. Nevertheless, care staff do not have access to a clear procedural framework to enrich their knowledge. This extends to anti-bullying, complaints, safeguarding and recruitment procedures, that all have shortfalls in their levels of detail to fully meet national minimum standards and formal guidance. For example, students do not have access to a complaints procedure in a format that clearly explains to them their options and rights, and for some students they are unsure about how to raise a concern. Risk assessments to support these procedures

also require further development. This includes having a system that monitors risk and prevents harm. More positively, the school conforms to all health and safety procedures, such as fire, electrical and water safety that enhances the safety of students and staff.

Student's social, spiritual and health needs are captured through the development of the placement plan. However, their contribution to all elements of their progress and setting of targets is limited. As a result, they have only partial ownership of their own plan of care.

Care staff work hard to provide a pleasant environment for students to stay. Each unit is well equipped and has domestic style furniture and furnishings. All school facilities are utilised to match the diverse interests of the student population.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the individual needs of students. All shifts start with handovers which ensure care staff are briefed on the care of students. Staff confirmed excellent communication exists throughout the school, including receiving training and having regular staff meetings.

There is an effective self-evaluation that demonstrates the quality of care is assessed and that students' experience is positive. The headteacher and the head of care, supported by the governors, have a good understanding of how the care provision needs to develop further. They provide a good level of support and challenge to drive forward further improvement.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Ensure the school's written complaint's procedural guideline meets the national minimum standards. (NMS 4.3).
- Ensure the school's safeguarding procedures are consistent with the local policies and procedures agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This must include meeting all the requirements set out at appendix 1 of the national minimum standards. (NMS 5.3 and 5.4)
- Ensure the school's anti-bullying policy meets the national minimum standards. Also, ensure that the school regularly carries out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest. (NMS 6.2 and 6.5)
- Ensure that senior staff regularly review the implementation and effectiveness of actions identified as a result of risk assessments and make sure that risk assessments are completed for all hazards that effect the safety and welfare of boarding students. (NMS 26.3 and 26.4)
- Ensure the school has a clear recruitment process recorded to meet the national minimum standards. (NMS 27.1)
- Ensure that the student's placement plan is completed as far as practicable with their involvement and that students know its content, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with their needs. (NMS 17.2 and 17.7)

This is the grade for the boarding provision

Views of parents and carers

As some of the students board it was difficult for the school to ensure that parents and carers returned the questionnaire by the end of the on-site inspection. Of the 14 returned, there was 100% agreement in respect of 12 out of the 13 statements. One return disagreed that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. Inspection evidence pointed to effective strategies to deal with unacceptable behaviour in and around school. It is interesting to note that the students themselves said that they often found it difficult to behave well at home. The three comments from parents and carers indicated how well the school kept them informed and voiced their thanks.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cloughwood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree Disa		gree	Strongly disagree		
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	57	6	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	36	9	64	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	43	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	71	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	57	5	36	1	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	43	8	57	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description	
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An oustanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.	
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.	
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.	
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.	

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	 The school's capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. The quality of teaching. The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Cloughwood School, Northwich, CW8 1NU

Thank you for your help when Michelle Moss, Sarah Drake and I visited Cloughwood to see how well you are getting on. I know some of you do not welcome visitors – and not all of you behaved at your best when we were there – but thank you for completing the questionnaires and sharing your views about school and boarding.

We agree with you and your parents and carers that the school does a good job in helping you to manage your emotions and to 'learn better'. When you are really interested and put your all into it, you do well. We could see that you liked being active and enjoyed the challenge of quizzes, problems and being science detectives. Some of your displayed work is of a good standard and it was great to hear the positive feedback after Year 11's mock job interviews. It is also clear that many of you – whatever your age – could do better work more of the time and be less dependent on the adults to tell you how to do it. Mr Larkin and the staff have your welfare at heart and have improved what the school can offer you. Some of you who have been at the school some time, mentioned how things are better than they were.

We found that some things are not as good as they could be and so we have asked the governors and staff to do the following things:

- help you all to move on faster by breaking your learning into small steps, showing clearly what you need to do and checking closely that you understand
- involve you even more in deciding what and how you should learn and how well you are reaching your personal targets, which for those of you who board, could cover the full 24 hours!
- update care and teaching staff on what the school has to do and make sure that all procedures and paperwork meet requirements, and to look more closely at information about your behaviour and progress to identify how best to plan further improvements with you in mind.

This is a chance for you to have a much larger say in what the school offers you. We hope that you will take it and work with the staff to help you.

Yours sincerely,

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector

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