

Sandside Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112466
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337938
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Allan Lacey HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E Shuttleworth
Headteacher	Mr Martin Alloway
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Sandside Road Ulverston Cumbria LA12 9EF
Telephone number	01229 894180
Fax number	01229 894180
Email address	admin@sandsidelodge.cumbria.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent three quarters of their time looking at learning, visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, parents and carers, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked in detail at the following: the school's development plan and safeguarding policies; the school's data on pupils' progress; pupils' books, assessment records and case studies; and minutes of various meetings, including those of the governing body. The inspectors also analysed the 31 parents' and carers' questionnaires received.

- the progress and achievement of all learners
- how well the curriculum equips and empowers pupils to lead enjoyable and independent lives within the context of their disability
- the quality of teaching throughout the school
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body
- how well the school works with parents and partners, including multi-agency children's services, to promote students' learning and well-being.

Information about the school

Sandside Lodge School is a school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils come from the southern or western Lake District areas of Cumbria and all have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. A very large majority of pupils and young adults are from White British backgrounds. There are almost four times as many boys as girls.

The school has the Healthy School Award.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the effectiveness of leadership and management in driving school improvement.

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils make satisfactory progress and behave well. Teaching is satisfactory. It varies from class to class and there are examples of good teaching. However, not all teachers make effective use of detailed assessment information to plan their lessons. Learning targets are often too broad and do not provide sufficient challenge for pupils. The curriculum is good and provides a suitably wide range of enrichment and personal development opportunities for pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy as well as the development of skills of independent living.

Pupils respond well to the caring ethos of the school. They all make good progress in their personal development. Pupils feel safe and secure and are in no doubt that adults will listen carefully to their views. They feel well supported and become confident and happy learners. Their positive relationships with staff and each other and the good attendance of all but a very few pupils with severe medical conditions, are further evidence of their enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management, including governance, are inadequate. Effective day-to-day management ensures that the school operates smoothly. The headteacher has not, however, ensured that the senior leadership team works with a unified sense of purpose. Although the school's strengths and weaknesses are understood, systems for improving the school and monitoring its effectiveness lack rigour. Nevertheless, some senior and middle leaders have brought about some significant improvements by their well-driven, considered and evaluated actions. These demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - - the school's senior leadership team works with a unified sense of purpose to develop a shared commitment to improvement amongst all staff
 - - systems for monitoring school performance are robust and rigorously applied
 - - the governing body provides the necessary challenge to senior leaders to bring

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about improvement.

- Improve learning and progress for pupils of all abilities by ensuring that all teaching makes effective use of assessment so that the needs of all pupils are met consistently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is very low because of the nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Given the pupils' challenging needs, the rate of learning and progress is satisfactory overall with some examples of good and outstanding progress. In lessons where teaching is good or better, pupils respond well to challenging questions, supported, where appropriate, by aids such as symbols, signing or switches. In other lessons, there are missed opportunities to fully challenge the pupils both intellectually and physically.

Sandside Lodge is a happy school, behaviour is good and attitudes to learning are really positive. In the secondary department and the sixth form all young adults make good progress in improving their skills of independent living. This, in turn, develops their self-esteem and prepares them well for life beyond the school. There is no significant underachievement by any individuals or different groups of pupils or young adults.

Pupils say that they feel safe, with one commenting: 'We feel safe here, there is no danger!' They stress the fact that there is no bullying or unpleasantness in the school. The Healthy Schools Status is indicative of the school's commitment to enabling pupils and young adults to understand and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils have made good progress in this area as they have also done in their knowledge of personal hygiene and health issues. Pupils develop a good understanding of the needs of others by actively helping their friends in school and by supporting a number of national charities. There are opportunities to visit the local community and the majority of the young adults are able to take part in work experience placements within the community. Attendance is in line with the national average and is improving. A small number of pupils are unable to attend the school fully due to severe medical conditions.

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.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in lessons where objectives for learning are ambitious, stated clearly and based on what each pupil knows and can do. They work hard, do their best and learning is fun. However, there are other lessons where previous assessments are not used well enough to identify what the pupils need to learn next and their progress slows. Expectations are, at times, not high enough and the pace of learning and use of time is not always effective.

The school has embarked upon extensive curriculum reviews with an emphasis upon the development of skills that the students will use in their lives. These developments are having some impact upon learning, as in the improved independence of pupils in the secondary school. The curriculum provides a wide range of interesting learning experiences for the pupils throughout the school. An appropriate emphasis is placed upon the teaching of communication, reading, writing and number skills in the primary section. Cross-curricular links are used well to provide a cohesive learning package for pupils.

Pupils receive high levels of care at all times from the staff. Induction into school life is well thought out. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are identified and supported well. The school works thoughtfully and effectively with agencies to support pupils' well-being. Pupils' individual needs are well supported because of the effective relationships with health therapists. The school's work with families ensures that parents and carers can gain access to training and support their child's needs effectively.

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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 has an ambitious vision for the development of the school. However, he has not ensured that this is fully shared and understood by all staff. As a result, the school lacks a common sense of purpose and commitment to further improvement. Nevertheless, some senior and middle leaders have brought about improvement in a number of key areas, for example, the development of the curriculum, the increase in the range and quality of accredited learning and the school's provision for work-related learning. The school has established a wide range of partnerships with other schools and support services to enhance learning at all key stages and for all groups of pupils. These partnerships make a satisfactory contribution to the progress of the pupils, but have yet to fully be incorporated into an effective system which is characterised by clear communication and shared goals.

Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted and discrimination tackled. The school has a good understanding of its own context and it makes a strong contribution to community cohesion.

Governance is inadequate. Governors are supportive of the school. They have started to become involved in school evaluation and are beginning to challenge the school to improve. However, these efforts have not had sufficient impact on bringing about improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are satisfactory overall and some are good. There are no major shortcomings evident in the use or management of resources. These factors mean that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	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 of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with extremely complex needs. They make satisfactory progress towards their individual learning goals. There is well planned provision that focuses on developing communication skills so that children are able to express themselves and develop the ability to ask for their needs to be met. Children grow in self-confidence, feel secure and are able to enjoy the activities. Sensory resources are used well to support learning. Adults make satisfactory use of ongoing assessment to identify what children can do and the next steps in their learning. These systems are still developing and have yet to have a full impact upon outcomes for children's. Communication with parents is effective. Partnerships with support agencies and health care professionals are developing and make a significant contribution towards ensuring that children's widely differing needs are met. The leadership and management of this area of school are satisfactory, but have yet to be included as part of a whole-school planning process.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Sixth form

Students enjoy their learning in the sixth form and good relationships with staff promote a sense of fun in lessons. They continue to build successfully on their academic progress by developing their ability to work both independently and with others. Students are able to choose from a widening range of accredited courses. The outcomes of assessment are increasingly well used to present appropriate levels of challenge to individual students. Work awareness and experience opportunities are good and personalised to the individual. The sixth-form manager has a clear direction for

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developments and recent changes demonstrate that this is being put into action.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and many commented on how well staff know their children and adapt learning to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Many refer to the creative and inventive ways in which teachers plan learning to make it meaningful for the pupils. Parents recognise and appreciate the high level of commitment from staff in supporting their children. A small number of parents who returned the questionnaire felt that the communication between home and school was not of a high enough quality. The inspection supports the positive opinions of most parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sandside Lodge 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 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	59	8	28	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	66	9	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	52	11	38	2	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	45	13	45	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	59	10	34	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	48	12	41	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	55	10	34	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)	14	48	9	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	66	6	21	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	52	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	59	10	34	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	17	59	8	28	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	66	8	28	1	3	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 outstanding 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Sandside Lodge School, Ulverston, LA12 9EF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and meeting with you. Thank you also for the 'Where's Spruce' Calendar. I have put it up on my wall.

Your school is a special place and you are right to be proud of it! We particularly liked the way you are gaining skills that will help you when you leave school. The school provides you with a good range of learning experiences. You make satisfactory progress. Staff care for you and support you well so that your personal development is good in many respects.

However, we have given the school a 'notice to improve'. This is because leaders and managers are not all as effective as they should be in improving the school. We have asked those who lead and manage the school to work together more closely to find out what is working well, as well as what needs to be better, and then plan accordingly. We have also asked the staff and governors to make better use of all the assessment information they have about you to make sure that in every lesson you have tasks that are just right for you.

People from outside will come in to help the school and another inspector will visit in a few months to see how the school is improving. You can all do a great deal to help your school along this road, particularly by continuing to be positive about your school, working very hard, and behaving really well.

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Allan Lacey

Lead Inspector

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