

Elemore Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114337
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338341
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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 pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Walsh
Headteacher	Mr Richard Royle
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pittington Durham DH6 1QD
Telephone number	0191 3720275
Fax number	0191 3721529
Email address	elemore@durhamlearning.net

Age group	11–16
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Boarding provision**Social care Unique Reference Number****Social care inspector**

Steve Pearson

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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 and one social care inspector. The inspectors spent 60% of inspection time visiting nine teachers in 14 lessons. They also held meetings with governors, education and care staff, and the school council. They observed the school's work, and looked at curriculum plans, the student tracking and assessment scheme, care and welfare documentation and 31 questionnaires received from parents and carers

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

- the progress made by all groups of students
- students' behaviour in both the school and boarding provision
- health and safety and students' welfare in both the school and boarding provision.

Information about the school

Elemore Hall School provides places for up to 72 students who have a statement of special educational needs because of severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many also have additional complex learning difficulties. The school offers day and extended day places to boys and girls and weekly boarding places to boys only. There are currently four girls on roll. Around 35% of students board on two or three occasions per week. Students come from throughout the local authority area and, on occasions, from beyond the county. Students currently attending are predominantly of White British heritage. Ten per cent of those attending are in the care of the local authority. Students join the school between the ages of 11 and 15 years.

The school has recently gained International School status and has a range of national accreditations including Investors in People, Investing in Children, Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark and Heartbeat awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Elemore Hall is a good school. The good standard of care, guidance and support provided for all students and the success with which their severe behavioural and complex learning needs are met enables them to make good progress both personally and academically. The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what students can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. Overall, self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is rigorous and the findings are acted upon to good effect. The success of the school in overcoming students' areas of weakness it identifies, for example in offering students regular opportunities to improve their writing skills in a variety of subjects, indicates a good capacity to improve further. Students arrive at school with large gaps in their learning and low self-esteem. As they begin to enjoy school, their confidence as learners is rebuilt, which results in a strongly improving trend in achievement. In turn, they then begin to show more mature attitudes and a willingness to interact with others. Older students respond especially well to the practical and vocational nature of the courses offered. This, coupled with a strong emphasis on academic subjects, ensures that students leave Year 11 with qualifications which prepare them well for the next phase of education or work. This represents good achievement across the school. Younger students settle quickly and start to engage with learning and, as a result, they make good progress, often exceeding previous targets. Students say that they feel safe because staff in both the school and boarding provision are there to support them. They feel listened to and are able to confide in their key workers. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by staff. Attendance is good for the majority of pupils although overall attendance figures are affected detrimentally by a small number whose attendance is below what it should be. The quality of teaching is good and is marked by teachers' high expectations of students, to which they respond well. Staff have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and engage most students well because lessons are made interesting and learning is relevant. Skilled teaching assistants are used effectively to support individuals in the classroom. Lesson plans are used by all staff but these do not always show how teachers plan to ensure that lessons meet the different needs of students. As a consequence, learning for the most able students slows in some lessons. The recently introduced tracking system enables staff to set challenging academic targets for students. However, it has yet to be fully implemented in all subject areas, which leads to inconsistencies in students' progress.

The 24-hour curriculum is well adapted for all students and is carefully balanced to support academic, personal and vocational needs. It is enhanced by a wide and varied

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number of activities throughout the day and evening. The school has focused well on ensuring that students have a clear understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. This has been supported well through the school's International School status and its continued participation in a European Union funded agricultural project. Care and academic staff know students exceptionally well and are very sensitive to the circumstances in their lives which make them vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further by:
 - improving lesson plans so that they meet the needs of all students
 - ensuring a consistent approach to setting challenging targets for students' learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensure that all students attend school regularly by:
 - working more closely with outside agencies to improve the attendance of the small group of students whose attendance is poor.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The calm and industrious atmosphere in the school's classrooms settles younger students very well. This allows staff to assess their needs and provide individual learning programmes in the core subjects. Coupled with the fast pace of learning in most lessons, this helps students to work consistently and achieve well. This could be seen clearly in a Key Stage 4 English lesson where students were organising information as part of a journey plan. Students were very well engaged and worked into break time reluctant to break off from their task. Students engage well with learning because staff are particularly good at building up their self-esteem and, as a result, their belief in their own ability to succeed. This, coupled with the wide range of academic and vocational courses offered, ensures that students leave with many qualifications and accreditations. The majority of the students who attend this school have become disengaged from learning because of their past experiences and, as a result, have attainment below national expectations. Staff are particularly successful at re-engaging them and, as a result, students across the key stages make good and sometimes outstanding improvements in learning. This fast rate of progress ensures that students often successfully catch up on missed learning and make better than predicted progress. Last year students passed examinations in 10 subjects at GCSE and all obtained their food hygiene certificates a year earlier. All students who attend the school are identified as having additional needs. These are well supported and, as a consequence, all groups make similar progress.

Students feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. One student commented: 'Staff really care here and treat us with respect. That hasn't happened to me at school before.' They enjoy eating healthy meals together throughout the day when staff join them in family groups. This, coupled with the popular sports

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options offered both in and outside school time, ensures that students have an understanding of healthy lifestyles. Staff recognise that students do not always make the right choices so, for example, in conjunction with the school nurse they have recently introduced a smoking cessation programme for those who need it. Students make a good contribution to the community both in and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others, for example students' work in partnership with local nature conservation groups making and siting bird boxes in the school grounds, thus helping to conserve local wildlife. Students' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Information and communication technology is used well in lessons to support learning and involve students in making choices. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to ensure that students are kept on task. Learning rarely slows even when students' behaviour occasionally lapses. When this happens the calm approach of all

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

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staff defuses the situation. Students' positive behaviour is reinforced well by photographs taken in lessons which are displayed on screens around school.

Teachers use assessment information to inform students of their targets. However, this is not consistently rigorous in all subjects. As a result, students' progress is not as fast in some areas of the curriculum. Most teachers plan lessons conscientiously. In the best cases good attention is given to ensuring that work is modified to meet the different needs of students in the class. However, on occasions, when this does not happen, learning is less effective, particularly for the most able.

The curriculum is well organised and is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Bush craft learning is well established and links with many areas of the curriculum. For example, a Key Stage 4 resistant materials lesson objective to 'identify hard and soft woods' was very well enhanced by a trip into the school grounds to identify different trees. A wide range of vocational courses are offered, including certificates in food and hygiene for all students as well as do-it-yourself courses in painting and decorating. These contribute well to students' development and future economic well-being.

As a result of good care, guidance and support, students feel there is always someone who will listen and help. One student expressed this well when he said, 'I know even when I feel very angry someone will care.' A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when students arrive at the school and it is then used to target support effectively. Links with most outside agencies are good and vulnerable students are well supported. However, the attendance of a very small minority of students remains a problem and school recognises the need to address this issue in partnership with outside agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 reflective and visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is instrumental in moving the school forward. This, coupled with effective delegation of roles and responsibilities throughout the school, drives improvement further. The school's governing body has implemented satisfactory procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all students. Members offer valuable support to the school and are starting to offer challenge to senior leaders. Clear policies and procedures ensure that all government safeguarding requirements are met. Leaders and managers have ensured

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that the school is an inclusive community. Equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination in school is good. The school's successful and innovative international links include an EU Comenius project with five other European schools; this gives students an excellent opportunity to develop views and understanding of the diversity of the European Union. This, coupled with direct links to schools in Tanzania, contributes to students' good understanding of community cohesion.

The school makes great efforts to engage all parents and carers. The work of both care and school staff ensure that parents and carers are kept very well informed about their children's successes. Links with home are actively encouraged and, as a result, parents and carers value the work of the school. Strong partnerships with a wide variety of agencies contribute well to students' well-being and progress. The school ensures good outcomes for students, many of whom have extreme and significant needs. It does this on a tightly controlled budget and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding at Elemore Hall School is satisfactory. It has some strengths but there are weaknesses relating to the safety of boarders and organisational issues. The school does not meet all of the key national minimum standards.

The headteacher and staff are effective at promoting the health of young people. All the staff have received training in the safe administration of medications and in first aid. Medications are stored securely. However, accountability is weakened because the staff do not record the administration of controlled drugs in a bound book as recommended

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by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. Additionally, the school has not sought written parental permission for the staff to administer first aid to young people if necessary. Generally, young people enjoy the food. The quality can be summed up by young people's comments such as 'there is always a salad bar at lunch', 'no salt in food', 'vegetarian options available' and 'we talk to the cook about the food we like.' The school has been awarded the Heartbeat Award and Healthy Schools status for its promotion of good health. From time to time the school holds a cultural event and the young people are offered food as eaten by people in other countries, such as Libya or Morocco.

Staff deal with any complaints quickly and effectively on an informal level and a formal procedure is also in place. All the residential and teaching staff have received training in child protection. However, the ancillary staff have not received this training so there is a risk they are less knowledgeable about how to respond effectively to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse.

Some bullying occurs although the staff deal with it effectively. There are weaknesses in the counter-bullying procedures. Specifically, there is no generic risk assessment for the times and places where bullying might occur in the school. In addition, the risk assessment for individual young people does not separate the risk of bullying from the risk of being bullied.

Occasionally, young people in the residential units receive sanctions and these are appropriate. For example, one young person said, 'We don't get sanctions often but if we do they're fair.' The staff sometimes restrain young people in order to safeguard welfare. There is poor accountability about the use of sanctions and restraints because young people are not being encouraged to enter their comments or signature in the bound records. Additionally, the necessary details about each incident of restraint are not being recorded in the bound book.

The school itself is maintained as safe premises. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, boilers and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. However, safety is weakened because risk assessments do not cover the whole premises. For example, nobody has assessed the potential hazards associated with the residential units, the nearby public right of way and access road. There are also no individualised action plans for addressing the specific hazards rated as high risk in the risk assessments for young people. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe.

The residential units contribute to the education of young people and each member of residential staff works one day a week in the school. Residential staff are also effective at helping young people to learn skills which will be helpful when they are older and independent.

Young people also receive good levels of one-to-one support because they each have a personal tutor. Young people said, 'It's good having a personal tutor but we can talk to any of the staff when we want to.' All the staff have recently undertaken training in how to speak to young people about sex and relationships.

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The headteacher and staff are also effective at enabling young people to have a say about how the school is run and about their own education and care plans. For example, young people are represented in a school council and they also have regular one-to-one time with their personal tutor. Young people help to choose which staff are recruited to the school, they help to choose furnishings and fittings and they have a say in improvements to the facilities. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff excel at promoting cultural awareness and young people have links with a school in Tanzania and with schools across Europe. Staff are also effective at supporting young people to establish their own identity.

Care plans and statements of educational needs are updated regularly and each young person has a progress and achievement meeting every term. The school invites young people, and parents to complete quantifiable satisfaction questionnaires every term.

The school buildings are being maintained appropriately. Since the previous inspection, the whole building has been fitted with a new roof and the windows have been refurbished. There are some concerns about whether the number of hours allocated for cleaning is adequate.

Organisational arrangements for the provision of boarding are weak. The Statement of Purpose does not contain all the relevant information and is not easily understandable by young people. The parents' guide also does not contain enough relevant information. Consequently, external people are not receiving enough necessary information about the school and how it operates.

Only the teaching staff have an annual appraisal. This means the performance and development of other staff are not being monitored or promoted adequately.

Arrangements for self-improvement are also weak. For example, although half-termly visits by the independent visitor are comprehensive, a record is not being kept of when any actions or recommendations arising from the visits have been completed. Similarly, the headteacher, or delegated senior member of staff, is not monitoring and signing the necessary records on a regular basis.

Although the headteacher writes an annual report about the school, this does not cover the relevant issues about the residential facilities as recommended by the national minimum standards. Furthermore, each member of the governing body does not receive their own copy of a report as mentioned above. This means the quality of residential care is not being reviewed or reported on as fully as it should be.

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

- Follow the recommendations of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society regarding the recording of administration of controlled drugs (breach of NMS 14.20).
- Obtain, and retain on file for each child, prior written permission from a person or body with parental responsibility for that child, for the administration of first aid (breach of NMS 14.10).
- Ensure that when an incident of restraint occurs, the relevant information is recorded in a bound book with numbered pages, including the young person's comments and signature (breach of NMS 10.14).

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- Ensure that where sanctions are imposed, students are encouraged to write or otherwise have their views recorded and sign their names against them, if possible, in the recording book (breach of NMS 10.9).
- Ensure that ancillary staff receive training in child protection (breach of NMS 5.8).
- Ensure that each young person's risk assessment for bullying separately assesses the risk of being bullied and the risk of bullying others (breach of NMS 6.3).
- Conduct a risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest (breach of NMS 6.5).
- Ensure that the risk assessments for the school's premises includes those issues recommended by the standard and action plans identify how hazards are to be reduced. (breach of NMS 26).
- Ensure that the Statement of Purpose provides the names of the designated members of staff for child protection and the names and relevant professional qualifications of all staff working at the school (breach of NMS 1.3).
- Ensure that the Statement of Purpose is understandable by young people or, if not, provide the information in another format, such as a students' guide (breach of NMS 1.4).
- Ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal (breach of NMS 30.6).
- Ensure that the parents' and carers' guide contains the information recommended in the standard (breach of NMS 31.10).
- Ensure that there is regular monitoring of records by the headteacher or delegated senior member of staff and that the head once a year carries out a written review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision (breach of NMS 32).
- Ensure that each member of the governing body receives a copy of the half-termly monitoring report and a record maintained when any recommendations or actions arising from half-termly monitoring are completed (breach of NMS 33.5).

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	3
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Views of parents and carers

Twenty-nine parents and carers replied to the inspection questionnaire. The vast majority of parents and carers were pleased with the provision that Elemore Hall school makes for their children. They feel that their children enjoy coming to school and that the school keeps them safe. A large majority of parents and carers consider that the school keeps them well informed and meets the needs of their children well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Elemore Hall 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 66 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	42	15	48	3	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	55	12	39	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	61	12	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	35	19	61	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	58	13	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	55	11	35	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	52	14	45	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)	15	48	14	45	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	55	14	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	55	11	35	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	45	14	45	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	61	11	35	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	58	12	39	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.



12 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Elemore Hall School, Durham, DH6 1QD

Thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed meeting you all and seeing where you live when at school as well as visiting you in the classroom. We were particularly impressed by how well you behaved during our visit and how keen you were to talk to us about your school. We feel that nearly all of you are working very hard and are enjoying your time at Elemore Hall. You told us that you all get on well together most of the time and are able to discuss any worries you may have with staff. Your teachers work hard to ensure that you have as many choices as possible so that you leave with as many qualifications as possible.

You also told us that staff were friendly and treated you with respect. We feel your teachers and care staff work particularly hard at ensuring that you are well cared for and guided to make the right choices. We also feel that they work very well as a team to ensure that you succeed and make the most of your time at Elemore Hall.

To help make your school even better we have asked staff to:

- help you achieve even more by ensuring that all teachers plan lessons to take account of your different learning needs and set challenging targets for your learning in each area of the curriculum
- make sure that everyone attends school regularly.

We all hope you have a well earned half-term break and come back refreshed and ready for work.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas

Lead Inspector

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