

Walworth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114341
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338342
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake 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 pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mathew Robson
Headteacher	Mr Peter Wallbanks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bluebell Way Newton Aycliffe DL5 7LP
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Boarding provision**Social care Unique Reference Number****Social care inspector**

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspection of the boarding provision was carried out by an Ofsted social care inspector. In school, the inspectors visited nine lessons, and held discussions with a member of the governing body, headteacher and deputy headteacher, teachers and other support staff who work in the school. The inspectors also spoke with the pupils in lessons and around the school. The inspectors observed the vast majority of the school's work, and looked at 30 parents' and carers' questionnaires, 32 staff, 49 pupil, and 14 boarding questionnaires. A range of school documentation was read, including details relating to safeguarding procedures in place at the school.

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

- the achievement profile of pupils as an indication of their progress at the school
- other pupil outcomes as evidence of their improving well-being
- the quality of teaching across all curricular areas to help raise standards and improve the pupils' all-round progress in their learning
- the robustness of the senior leadership's evaluation and monitoring of provision as an aid to future developments.

Information about the school

Walworth Community Special School caters for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There are currently no children of Early Years Foundation Stage age. The large majority of pupils are boys, and almost all are of White British heritage. The school has a higher than average rate of turnover of pupils, many of whom join and leave the school at times other than at the start of the school year in September. The school holds a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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

Walworth School provides a good and improving quality of education for its pupils. The pupils start at Walworth, having failed to achieve their potential in mainstream schools because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; many also have a background of poor attendance at their mainstream school. As a consequence of these difficulties, all pupils in the school have a statement of special educational need, which is designed to provide the additional support needed to help them overcome their learning difficulties and to progress in line with their capabilities.

Although standards are low, the overall progress that the pupils make during their time at the school is good. This progress applies, in particular, to improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, including the personal attitudes shown towards staff and peers in the school. The extent to which these personal attributes improve is impressive, and owes much to the focused work of staff at the school. The quality of teaching is generally good, and provides targeted support to pupils when they need it. Teachers diligently plan their lessons, but too infrequently pinpoint the specific range of skills, knowledge and types of understanding that they would expect from the pupils in their lessons. The good quality care, guidance and support provided mean that pupils feel safe and that they enjoy the many different activities on offer. The combination of these factors leads to high levels of enjoyment and the resultant good behaviour. The range of curricular activities provided also contributes significantly to how much pupils enjoy school. However, the school has yet to evaluate the impact of its curriculum on helping pupils to raise their standards and improve their progress in learning.

The overall quality of the boarding provision is satisfactory, with some aspects that are good or better. There are sufficient numbers of care staff to meet the varying needs of the young people, including their health, social and emotional needs. All safeguarding regulations are in place. The school currently fails to meet all the national minimum standards for residential education.

The school has dedicated and committed senior managers, including governors. While they are keen to achieve more for the pupils, some aspects of their work are underdeveloped. This applies, in particular, to the evaluation and monitoring role that governors are expected to fulfil when they continuously 'challenge and support' the school to improve. It also applies to their lack of involvement in self-evaluation, particularly in the written school improvement plan, which is used to focus actions and resources on key priorities for future improvement. Overall, however, the school has a good track record of tackling weaknesses and seeking improvement, and it spends wisely to ensure that it achieves good overall value for money. Accordingly, its capacity to improve is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teachers' planning to identify more clearly what pupils are expected to learn. This should be implemented as soon as possible.
- Ensure that governors are actively involved in evaluating and monitoring the work of the school through a greater involvement in school improvement planning and self-evaluation. This should be discussed and planned at the next governing body meeting, and thereafter, used as a regular agenda item at future meetings as a part of the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the school's performance.
- Improve the quality of curricular monitoring and evaluation as an aid to assessing its impact on raising standards and improving pupils' progress. This should be planned and implemented from the start of the spring term 2010.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for boarding, which have not been met.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good overall progress in their learning, having started at the school with low standards. The pupils make particularly impressive gains in improving their behaviour, attitudes to learning, and in regular attendance. These aspects are typically where the pupils have shown the greatest levels of disaffection in their previous schools. The vast majority of pupils are acquiring many of the key literacy and numeracy skills in preparation for the next stage of their education, and, although standards remain low, there are indications that these are also improving. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress, but some of the work does not challenge them sufficiently to make even better progress in their learning in order to reflect more accurately their capabilities. In lessons, pupils show good levels of concentration and are positive in their attitudes to class discussions, and in answering questions and tackling new learning activities. These characteristics were seen in all lessons during the inspection.

Pupils feel safe in school, with almost 96% of those who completed the inspection questionnaire confirming this view. Pupils clearly enjoy attending school and participating in the range of activities provided. This enjoyment makes a significant contribution to the good standards of behaviour seen in the school, and clearly contributes to the good overall standard of attendance.

The school actively promotes the well-being of its pupils, including eating healthily and engaging in regular exercise. The school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark, two national awards that are given in recognition of the quality of provision seen in these two areas, confirms the school's commitment to ongoing promotion of its pupils' health needs.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is good. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and generally show good social skills when working in whole-class plenary sessions, or in smaller groups. Most pupils are keen to share their views or experiences with peers and teachers in lessons. Occasional behavioural

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outbursts are seen, but are quickly and effectively dealt with by staff.

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is good, which is bringing about good overall progress in pupils' formal and social learning. Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall, and very detailed in terms of what will be taught. There is, however, less information in this planning about the intended learning outcomes for the pupils. Teachers make use of regular end-of-lesson evaluations about individual pupils, but the overall quality of these vary, and too often the comments are based on the completion of tasks, behaviour or attitudes shown and far less on the pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding from their learning. Teachers are adept at relating to their pupils, all of whom have a wide range of varying emotional, social and behavioural needs. There are very good relationships between pupils and adults in the school, with oral interchanges always delivered in a considered and careful manner, relative to the needs of the pupil. The additional adult support in lessons works well and the pupils show good levels of confidence when working with support assistants. Teachers' marking is at least

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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satisfactory, often good. Where it is best, teachers provide succinct comments about the effort and quality of the work produced. In a smaller number of classes, this also includes details about the level of the work produced. Teachers' questioning is mainly satisfactory, but occasionally too fast and too closed to allow sufficient opportunities for all pupils to actively participate.

The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is generally well matched to the needs of the pupils, and is well organised to provide a range of different learning opportunities. The range and take up of additional activities is good, and much enjoyed by the pupils. Opportunities to learn away from the school add to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. The cross-curricular promotion and application of key literacy and numeracy skills is less well developed as teachers plan their own topics separately. There is currently no overall evaluation and monitoring of the curriculum to assess its impact on pupils' learning and progress.

The school has clear systems for ensuring that it maintains a good quality of care, guidance and support for the pupils. Staff know the pupils well, and respond appropriately to their varying needs, and occasional outbursts. In all lessons, teachers and support staff work effectively together to ensure that the pupils receive ongoing and targeted support when working individually or in small groups. Adults show respect for the pupils and their comments, using personal praise to good effect. The school is very aware of the need to celebrate the small steps of success that the pupils achieve. Strategies for helping pupils when they present challenging behaviour are effective.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, with some aspects that are good. Senior managers, including governors, are clear in their desire to improve provision and help the pupils to achieve the best they can. The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers is good, with a clear system of regular lesson observations, which helps teachers to know their strengths and areas for development. Staff appreciate the value of this work in helping them to improve their classroom practice. However, there is currently less emphasis on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in their learning. Development planning is of a satisfactory standard, but is limited by a failure to pinpoint the evaluation strategies to be used to monitor the progress in the identified priorities and actions over the life of the plan. Furthermore,

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there are no specific references to the evaluating and monitoring role of the governing body, as part of their 'challenge and support' to the school. Scrutiny of the most recent minutes of governing body meetings show a broad range of discussions held, and that consensus decisions have been made. However, these minutes also show that governors have been insufficiently involved in self-evaluation, including the requirement to monitor the quality of welfare of the children in the school on a half-termly basis. All managers have suitable expectations of the improvements needed, and there is a shared sense of common purpose emanating from the school. All staff, parents and carers subscribe willingly and enthusiastically to the vision that senior managers have for further improvements across the school; namely the continued emphases on helping all children who join the school to improve their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The overall quality of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being is good, and the school has established strong links with specialist agencies, including those from the local authority. This range of specialist support is making an important contribution to pupils' improved attendance, behaviour and general attitudes to school. The overall quality with which the school tackles discrimination and promotes equality is good. However, while there are clear policies in place to promote these aspects, agreed dates for the review and monitoring of identified actions have not been met.

The school has satisfactory safeguarding procedures in place to meet the varying needs of its pupils. Suitable checks are undertaken to ensure that all those who work in the school are appropriately qualified and are able to work with the children. Risk assessments for the use of the school building, and in meeting fundamental health and safety requirements for activities taught are satisfactory.

Pupils have a good understanding of their school community and a satisfactory appreciation of life outside of school in the broader communities that reflect their local, regional and national areas.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Boarding provision

The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is satisfactory, with some aspects that are good or better.

Admissions to the boarding unit are planned effectively and meet the specific needs and preferences of each pupil. The health needs of the pupils are well met, and there are good arrangements for storing and monitoring medication. However, the staff do not always keep appropriate records of the medication administered to the young people. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, with staff sensitive to the promotion of pupils' privacy. Anti-social behaviour, including bullying, is challenged robustly, although staff do not use an appropriate record format to record sanctions given to the young people. Also, some of the school's procedures, such as the complaints procedures in the staff handbook and statement of purpose are not kept up to date. Young people say they feel safe when staying in the residential unit. The school conforms to all health and safety procedures, including the checking of all adults to ensure they are suitable to work with the pupils. Although fire safety regulations meet requirements, not all care staff take part in fire drills as often as recommended in the staffing policy.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the individual needs of the young people. Care staff are exceptionally good at supporting and promoting education and achievement by ensuring young people attend school regularly and punctually. The links with school staff are good, with close working helping to support the pupils in school. Young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills for living in the residential unit, and their views and opinions are actively sought. There are also effective links with the young people's families, with access to clear information about the school and the residential unit. However, the school's statement of purpose does not include any information about the electronic monitoring system that is used in the residential unit.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. A representative of the governing body carries out monitoring visits to the school and completes detailed and comprehensive reports but, this year the visits have not been every half term as recommended.

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

- Ensure appropriate records are kept of all medication given to young people (NMS 14.20).
- Ensure that a record of all sanctions is kept in a bound and numbered book and in a format that will ensure appropriate confidentiality, should young people choose to record their views (NMS 10.9).
- Carry out fire drills in accordance with the guidance in the residential unit's staffing policy (NMS 26).
- Update the school's statement of purpose and amend it to include details of the electronic monitoring system used in the residential unit (NMS 1).

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- Ensure staff are provided with written guidance on procedures and policies that is kept up to date (NMS 30.7).
- Ensure the arrangements for monitoring the school's records are effective and that visits to monitor the welfare of young people are carried out once every half term (NMS 32 and 33).

This is the grade for the boarding provision

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

The rate of response from parents and carers was 48%. Of those parents and carers who did respond, the overwhelming majority is positive about the school's provision for their children. A very small number took the opportunity to write additional comments on the questionnaire, although there was no significant pattern to these.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Walworth 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	75	6	21	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	93	2	7	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	61	9	32	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	50	11	39	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	75	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	46	12	43	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	71	7	25	1	4	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	54	10	36	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	75	5	18	2	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	82	3	11	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	54	10	36	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	82	4	14	1	4	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.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walworth School, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 7LP

You will know that I recently visited Walworth, with two colleagues, to find out how well your school is doing. I should like to briefly tell you about some of the important things we saw in school.

- The school provides you with a good and improving standard of education.
- You make good overall progress, especially in improved behaviour, attendance and attitudes to school.
- We agree with those of you who said that you enjoy school and that you feel safe.
- There are many different activities that the school offers, all of which help you to enjoy your learning. However, to make them even better, we are asking the school to look at ways in which these activities can help you to improve your work.
- The residential unit provides satisfactorily for those of you who stay there, but there are some aspects that the school must address in order to meet all the national standards set for residential education.
- Your teachers provide you with good quality care and support, and, although their teaching is good, we are asking them to write down, as clearly as they can what they expect you to learn in all your lessons. This will help them to know how well you are all doing in these lessons.
- Your headteacher and governors are working hard to help the school improve further. However, we are asking that governors become more involved in the written school plan, and in the ways they assess how well the school is doing. This will ensure that they continue to spend money wisely on those things that you most need.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school and were grateful for the way in which you greeted us in your lessons, and when we walked around the school. We would encourage you to continue working hard and to attend school regularly.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake HMI

Lead inspector

On behalf of the inspection team

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