

Windlestone School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114347
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338343
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Porter
Headteacher	Mr Tim Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chilton Ferryhill County Durham DL17 0HP
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Age group	11–16
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Boarding provision	Windlestone School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC007615
Social care inspector	Shaun Common

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held discussions with governors, staff, and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at much of the school's documentation including improvement plans and school brochures. Twenty four parental questionnaires were scrutinised alongside 43 from students and 32 from staff. A further 14 questionnaires returned by students who access the boarding provision were also scrutinised.

Boarding provision was inspected at the same time as the school by one social care inspector.

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

- the rate at which standards are improving
- the ways in which the school has changed under the leadership of the new headteacher
- the quality of provision and outcomes for all students including those in the Special Needs Alternative Programme
- the attendance of students.

Information about the school

The school provides for students who have a statement of special educational need to reflect the severity of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Since the last inspection the school has expanded to include provision known as the Special Needs Alternative Programme (SNAP) which caters for up to 40 Key Stage 4 students who have disengaged from other special schools and exhibit a wide range of extreme and debilitating behaviours. Until December 2006, SNAP students were classified as being educated other than at school but since September 2007, they have been included on the roll of Windlestone School. Many SNAP students join the school in Year 11. The school operates on three sites. Nearly all students are White British. Boys significantly outnumber girls. A large majority of students are eligible for free school meals.

A new headteacher took up post in September 2008, following the retirement of the previous headteacher who had been in post for almost 25 years.

There is boarding provision for up to 20 students at any one time.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has coped well with the upheaval caused by its assumption of responsibility for SNAP. This is largely due to good leadership and management, especially by the headteacher. Over the past year, self-evaluation has been extremely rigorous and suitably self-critical. Excellent plans have been drawn up to address weaknesses and build upon strengths. These plans are being rapidly implemented and as the school settles to its extended role, improvements are gaining pace. There is a strong commitment to raising academic standards to match the good progress students make in their personal development. As a result, last year's examination results for Year 11 students showed that twice as many students gained at least five GCSE passes than in the year before. Staff embrace the many opportunities being provided to help them develop professionally. They are embracing the changes being made and feel fully involved in what the school is trying to achieve. In sharing a common purpose and sense of pride they are contributing well to the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Teaching is satisfactory. Much of it is good but it is very variable. The best lessons cater precisely for the full range of individual needs as identified by thorough ongoing assessment. A few teachers do not do this well enough. After-school activities and the contribution of boarding provision to extend the curriculum around the clock are exceptionally good. In some instances, curriculum planning for topic work lacks rigour because planning does not sufficiently identify exactly which areas of the curriculum are being served within each topic. Opportunities are also being missed to ensure that literacy is being promoted across the whole curriculum and this is a contributory factor to progress in English, particularly writing, being slower than in other subjects.

The school contributes satisfactorily to community cohesion. Many students are involved intermittently in community work. The school also welcomes residents of the local village to use its facilities for special events and meetings. There is, however, insufficient formal planning or evaluation of the ways in which it can contribute more.

Boarding provision makes a very valuable contribution to many aspects of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a consistent approach to the planning of teaching and learning so that:
 - all lessons are characterised by clear identification of learning objectives closely matched to the needs and abilities of individual students
 - a range of activities is provided to enable all students to meet these objectives

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- progress in relation to objectives is regularly assessed and matched to individual student plans.
- Plan more thoroughly the ways in which writing can be more effectively promoted across the whole curriculum so as to contribute more to the raising of standards in English.
- Coordinate the planning for topic work more effectively so as to clearly identify which areas of learning are being served in lessons.
- Introduce more cohesive planning for the ways in which the school can contribute most effectively to community cohesion.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Some students make good progress but others lack confidence and remain overly dependent on adult support. During the inspection, students were often seen to be working hard but usually within their capabilities. Many retain a tendency to resist higher levels of challenge but they usually show enjoyment in lessons and are proud of their efforts. Nearly all students complete the tasks they are set. In Key Stage 3, there is little difference in students' performance in different subjects. Many make good progress in reading, speaking and listening but demonstrate a marked reluctance to write to any length and this has an impact on progress in English. In Key Stage 4, students make slower progress in English than in other subjects. Across the whole school, the best progress is often seen in subjects such as physical education and music, where some individuals show exceptional talent. Progress is slowest in SNAP, where the most disaffected students are found and attendance is poorest. Nevertheless, progress can still be detected among most students and it is improving as students' confidence in the provision rises, the curriculum improves and teaching is becoming more formalised and focused on promoting basic skills. There is no noticeable difference in the progress of boys and girls.

Improvements in SNAP are evident in the way that the range and quality of results has risen over the past year. In 2008, half of the students left school with no qualifications but in 2009, virtually all gained qualifications including Entry level English and mathematics. Inspection visits to the SNAP bases witnessed students working hard and contentedly on a range of activities which were promoting the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. In the main school, standards are higher, though still below average. As in SNAP though, they are rising fast. Last year, twice as many students gained at least five GCSE passes as in the previous year.

Absence at SNAP is high but even so, most students show an improving pattern of attendance, often from a baseline of nil in other settings. Attendance has improved over the past year as provision has become more established and purposeful. Attendance in the main school is good for a school of this type. Overall, however, too many older students do not demonstrate that they understand that attendance and punctuality are

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essential qualities that future employers value and this diminishes the extent to which students are developing the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. On the positive side, the growing number of qualifications students gain before leaving school is likely to enhance their prospects of employability.

During the inspection, behaviour in all settings was good. No lessons were interrupted by poor behaviour. The need to exclude students is falling as is the frequency of serious incidents. Since the last inspection the need for restraint has halved, as has vandalism. Discriminatory behaviour has almost been eradicated, as has internal truancy. Students almost unanimously report that they feel safe and all of those who responded to a questionnaire or spoke to inspectors said they enjoyed school. Responses from boarding students were particularly positive.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The evidence of inspection confirms that the school's self-evaluation of teaching is accurate. About a half of that seen was good, the rest satisfactory. One music lesson was outstanding. No inadequate teaching was observed, although the school has

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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identified some previously during routine monitoring and evaluation. Teachers manage their classrooms well. They take care to ensure that support staff are carefully deployed to help those students who most need it. Relationships between adults and students are excellent. This plays an enormous role in maintaining order in classrooms, and leads to students feeling happy, safe and behaving well. Teachers show a good awareness of how far they can push the boundaries of learning before reluctance turns to resistance. Use of computers and other recent technology is variable. There is some good use of new technology in classrooms, for instance in the use of video to help students improve their performance on the trampoline or digital imagery to help them develop artwork. A few teachers do not make sufficient use of the school's ample computer resources to promote learning. Lesson planning is variable. At its best it clearly identifies the individual needs of students, shows how work will be varied to address these needs and identifies how progress towards targets will be assessed. Over the past year there has been a concerted drive to improve assessment and most teachers are showing that they understand the importance of assessment as a tool to help them vary work to meet the needs of individuals. With some teachers this has yet to become second nature with the result that opportunities to use timely questioning to gauge students' understanding, and hence fine-tune the nature of tasks, are occasionally missed.

In most respects the curriculum is well matched to students' needs. It is well organised and provides students with many opportunities to learn and develop. The extended school day plays a major part in many students' lives, adding greatly to their enjoyment of school and to their personal development and well-being. Many of the activities provided after school and in the residence contribute enormously to students adopting healthier lifestyles and developing cultural and community interests. Personal, health and social education provides the most important and effective link between all aspects of the curriculum. Cross-curricular promotion of literacy is weaker as is the planning for topic work, which is left to individual teachers rather than being centrally organised, with the result that there is insufficient overview of its effectiveness. The curriculum in SNAP is purposefully adapted to meet the needs of students who have rejected a more formal Key Stage 4 curriculum. The whole intention of SNAP is to be different from school. While suitable provision is made for the promotion of basic skills, the promotion of vocational skills and preparation for adult life assumes greater prominence. The impact of the curriculum in SNAP is variable, depending on the quality of training providers. These are being increasingly well monitored and evaluated.

Parents are unanimous in feeling that their children are well cared for, guided and supported. They are confident that the school is meeting their children's needs. Students are also certain that they are well cared for and that adults are passionate about wanting to help them. These views are well justified. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Extensive work is done to ensure that the most vulnerable students are particularly closely monitored. Effective, additional support is given to students who find reading difficult. The handling of students in times of distress, when they often exhibit particularly challenging behaviour is well planned for and executed. Extensive, ongoing work is making inroads into improving attendance, though many students, mainly in

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SNAP, remain extremely resistant, often with the compliance of their parents.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is rapidly and sensitively bringing about change for the better. Building upon the school's deservedly good reputation for enhancing students' personal development, he is introducing increasing academic rigour into the work of the school. As a result, although academic outcomes remain satisfactory, they are rapidly improving. The headteacher has the full support of staff, all of whom feel valued and express pride in the contribution they are making to helping students towards better futures. All staff, parents and students feel the school is well led and managed. Nearly all feel it is well governed. Individual roles are very well understood and faithfully executed. There is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of every aspect of the school's work by senior staff but in this aspect there is the capacity for governors to play a more influential part. In many respects the leadership and management of teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very accurately monitored and evaluated and the headteacher knows exactly where strengths and weaknesses reside. However, the full impact of initiatives to improve teaching has yet to be realised. The governing body is hugely supportive of the school but in a few minor respects is not contributing enough to finding out for itself how the school runs on a day-to-day basis. The school shares many productive partnerships with other professionals, schools and agencies but partnerships with training providers for students in SNAP are not always effective or economical.

The school promotes equal opportunities for all. Not all students take advantage of these opportunities, for instance by failing to attend. There is a difference in the performance of students attending the main school and those in SNAP but the gap is closing as SNAP becomes more formalised. Safeguarding procedures are good. Staff are well trained and child protection procedures are rigorously followed. Students are well informed about the potential risks they take when pursuing a more independent lifestyle.

The school is moderately effective in promoting community cohesion. It helps students to understand their own heritage and the factors that have shaped their own community but is less effective in helping students to understand the broader community and what they can do to make it more harmonious. It is in this respect that planning is found

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wanting.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The quality of residential provision at Windlestone School is good. There are some outstanding areas and almost all of the National Minimum Standards are met, with some exceeded. There are a very few areas where the standards are not met but these have minimal impact upon the welfare and care of residents. The school has taken appropriate action to address 14 of the 16 recommendations contained in the previous report. These include updating information about the school, revising risk assessments, sanction records and placement plans and notifying Ofsted of any serious incidents. Residents feel safe and secure at the school, they get on well and speak very highly of staff and the support and care they receive.

There is outstanding provision at the school for identifying and addressing the health needs of residents. The school has achieved healthy school status. There are sound links with relevant health professionals and residents speak highly of the encouragement and support from staff to be healthy. Residents are provided with information on a range of health matters such as substance misuse, smoking and sexual health. Food is balanced and healthy and appreciated by residents. One young person stated, 'We are always encouraged to eat healthily.' Medication is managed safely and administered appropriately, although controlled drugs are not administered by two staff and recorded in a controlled drug register as recommended by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain to ensure accountability.

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There is good provision to safeguard residents. Residents feel safe and secure. They know how to complain should they need to and staff understand child protection procedures. Most residents said bullying does not occur and those that said it had felt staff address this very quickly. Behaviour is managed positively and through good relationships. Residents feel they are treated fairly. The recording of sanctions by staff, although appropriate, does not demonstrate that measures used are effective and positively shape residents' behaviour. Jargon is used in physical intervention records so it may not be understood by all who read it. Most health and safety matters are managed very well. However, the fire risk assessment has areas that are not fully completed and the recording of drills for residential provision is infrequent. This does not show who took part to evidence that all residents and staff know what to do to stay safe. Residents confirm they have had fire instruction.

The provision to ensure residents enjoy and achieve is outstanding. The transition between school and residential provision is seamless. Communication between staff across the school is excellent. Residential provision contributes effectively to enable residents achieve their potential. One young person said, 'If I need help or want more work to do I can ask any of the staff.' After-school activities are wide ranging and enjoyed by residents. One young person said, 'I love art and music. Staff help me in the art club and bring CDs in.'

The provision to ensure residents positively contribute is good. There are good placement plans that set out residents' needs and how these will be met. Admissions to and exits from the residence are managed well. There are opportunities for residents to visit before admission and well planned processes for leaving, as well as post-discharge support. There is good provision for ensuring residents can maintain contact with their families. A phone is freely accessible to make and receive calls and residents can receive visits from people important to them. Residents feel listened to and consultation takes place. They speak of daily meetings in school where they can forward their ideas as well as regular meetings within the residential provision. Residents said, 'everybody gets a say', and, 'they listen and change things'.

Residential accommodation is satisfactory overall. The accommodation generally is of a very good standard throughout with facilities that afford privacy and security and each young person has an en-suite bedroom, including shower and toilet. However the quality of the provision is compromised by an inadequate heating system. Some parts of the building are too hot and other parts are too cold affecting residents' overall well-being. There are good links with the local community, for example, residents are involved with supporting local older people and assisting them with their shopping. Residents also deliver the school's newsletter in the local area.

Organisation and management of residential provision are good. Information about the school in the statement of purpose is appropriate for any professional; however, it is not in a suitable format for residents who want to know about the school and its provision prior to admission.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Residents are treated equally, fairly and have opportunities to develop understanding and experience of different

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cultures and ways of life. Levels of staffing are appropriate to meet the needs of residents, are consistent and provide stability and a basis for good attachments and positive relationships. Residents speak very highly of staff. One young person said, 'I never want to leave'. Staff are mostly qualified, receive good support and understand the needs of residents.

There is good provision for the effective monitoring of the welfare of residents. This includes internal monitoring by the headteacher and head of care and regular visits by the school's independent person who provides a written report to the school in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

Being Healthy:

Follow the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's recommendations about the recording of controlled drugs (NMS 14.20).

Staying Safe:

Ensure recorded sanctions accurately describe the effectiveness of the measure imposed (NMS 10).

Ensure that records of physical intervention include the nature of the physical intervention used that it does not include jargon (NMS 10).

Revise the fire risk assessment to include the date of the assessment so it can be ascertained whether the document has been regularly reviewed and is up to date; ensure the document is fully completed with required actions (NMS 26).

Ensure fire drills for residence are carried out at least every six months; ensure records show the names of staff and initials of residents who have taken part in drills (NMS 26).

Economic Well-being:

Ensure that the heating in the residential units is satisfactory and fully meets the needs of the students (NMS 24).

Organisation:

Ensure the statement of purpose is in a form that can be understood by residents (NMS 1).

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

There are only minor omissions in the observation of National Minimum Standards. They have minimal impact on the care and welfare of students.

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Of the 24 who

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responded to the questionnaire distributed before the inspection only two voiced any criticism. One felt their child was not making enough progress another felt their child was not being helped to lead a healthy lifestyle. The evidence of inspection points to most students making at least satisfactory progress and that the school promotes healthy lifestyles well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Windlestone 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 118 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	63	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	63	8	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	50	10	42	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	58	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	50	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	42	12	50	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)	12	50	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	58	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	63	8	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	63	9	38	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 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 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Windlestone School, Ferryhill, DL17 0HP

It was a pleasure this week to share your experience of school with you. You left me in no doubt that you are happy at Windlestone and that you appreciate everything the school is doing to help you to achieve success.

I visit lots of schools like yours to see what is going well and where improvements could be made. This is what I thought about your school.

Windlestone is a satisfactory school. It has some good and occasionally outstanding features. You make enough progress to help you into the next stage of your lives but those of you who don't attend well, especially in SNAP, are in danger of not benefiting from what the school has to offer.

I saw you working hard in lessons and behaving well around the school. Some of you should be more confident about emerging from your comfort zone and taking on more challenging work without worrying if you make mistakes.

You clearly enjoy all the activities that are put on for you after school and in the residence. This doesn't surprise me because they are good.

You make a tremendous effort to behave well, even when troubles are bubbling up. Sometimes, they reach boiling point but when they do you are well supported and cared for.

You have a cracking good headteacher.

To help make your school even better I have asked the school to:

- make sure that teaching focuses more carefully on your individual needs
- ensure that you are taught how to write more confidently
- plan your topic work more carefully
- show how you can contribute more to the community.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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