

Limington House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116614
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338841
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Wilson
Headteacher	Ms Petra Smillie
Date of previous school inspection	6 September 2006
School address	St Andrew's Road South Ham Basingstoke RG22 6PS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, senior leaders of the school and other staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including 54 parents' questionnaires.

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

- pupils' progress and achievement, particularly those with additional difficulties such as autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties
- the quality of assessment of pupils' progress
- the quality of teaching throughout the school
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing improvements to provision and their capacity to sustain these improvements.

Information about the school

Limington House provides for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils have additional difficulties such as autistic spectrum disorders. Most pupils are White British while a few pupils are from other ethnic groups. The school has achieved a number of national awards, including the Enhanced Healthy Schools award, the silver Artsmark award and the Activemark and Sportsmark. The 14 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate facility on the school site.

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

Limington House is a good school. There are some outstanding features, notably in the very high standards of care and support for all the learners and in the excellent provision for post-16 pupils. The school has maintained good improvement in its performance since the previous inspection. The pupils' standards remain far below those expected in mainstream schools because of their learning difficulties, but all the pupils do well in their studies and a few have made outstanding progress. The pupils with additional needs such as autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) achieve equally well. The oldest students in post-16 provision make excellent progress across a range of personal and vocational skills. Younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall and get off to a good start in developing language and communication skills. The limitations in the accommodation, however, for these children, both indoors and for outdoor play, can sometimes affect the pace of their learning, despite the best efforts of the enthusiastic and committed staff in the unit.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned for individual pupils and are characterised by the high quality of support pupils receive from their teachers and the well-trained assistants. As a result, the pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The tracking of pupils' progress is very effective. This enables the school's leaders to identify strengths in teaching and intervene quickly when they detect any slight slowdown in the pupils' performance. The assessment of the pupils' progress is, however, inconsistent because teachers record progress in different ways. As a result, the very small steps in learning which pupils make are sometimes not recorded effectively. This means that learning targets are occasionally not focused clearly enough on each individual's learning needs. Pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work and this can slow down the pace of their learning. Teachers in the post-16 provision have worked hard to establish high quality teaching and learning. Assessment in this area is good because teachers carefully record the pupils' progress against very clear objectives, linked securely to schemes of work which lead eventually to accreditation.

The curriculum is good because teachers tailor activities effectively to students' needs and interests. As a result, the pupils tackle challenging tasks with enthusiasm. These activities range from experiences at a sensory level for pupils with profound disabilities to specific courses leading to accredited qualifications. The provision to teach the older students about the world of work and possibilities for training is very good and results in a significantly high proportion of leavers going on to further education and supported living.

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Pupils thrive within the caring ethos of the school. All of them make good progress in their personal development. They feel safe and secure and confident that adults will listen carefully to their views. This underpins their positive attitudes to learning and helps them to make good progress. The behaviour of most pupils is outstanding. They feel well supported and become confident and happy learners. The pupils enjoy school and this is evident through the excellent relationships they have with staff and the good attendance of all but a very few pupils.

Because of her significant experience and expertise and not least through her energy and commitment, the headteacher has been successful in driving the continuing improvement. A competent leadership team, which has grown in confidence and expertise, has supported her. The school evaluates its work well. It seeks and acts on the views of all connected with the school. The governing body is supportive and monitors aspects of the school's work robustly. Because of the school's rigorous self-evaluation and the determination of the governors and staff to provide the best possible service for the pupils, there is a good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the assessment of the small steps in pupils' learning by:
 - establishing consistency in assessment procedures
 - using the results of the assessment to set clear, focused targets for pupils which help them to understand how to improve their work.
 - Improve the indoor and outdoor accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they are better able to develop their independent learning and make more choices.

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

The majority of pupils make good progress because good teaching gives them the confidence and motivation to become enthusiastic learners. Pupils throughout the school are eager to do well. They listen attentively and concentrate as hard as they can because they enjoy lessons and find their learning to be exciting and fun. They respond well to questions, often by using aids such as symbols or switches.

The standards attained by pupils remain very low because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The pupils, however, were observed to make good progress in most lessons. The school's records confirm this. The pupils make good progress over time in communication and in their grasp of basic literacy and numeracy. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make equally good progress because of the high level of individual attention they receive and the quality of their interaction with adults. For example, pupils in Year 1 greatly enjoyed the experience of greeting their friends and being greeted by the adults in their class. There were smiles and very good eye contact as staff sang their names. Older pupils made good progress in choosing, firstly between preferred objects, and then pictures, stimulated by the enthusiasm of the adult working

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with them. Pupils with autism achieve well in overcoming the barriers to their understanding and communication. As a result, they make good and occasionally outstanding progress. There is no evidence of underachievement by any individual or group. By Year 11, most pupils are able to achieve success in appropriate external qualifications.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent because they feel safe and confident and know what is expected of them within the school's calm and friendly atmosphere. Over time, they develop understanding of healthy lifestyles and they enjoy the many opportunities for physical activity, including those at after-school clubs. The pupils' moral and social development is outstanding. They also make excellent progress in developing spiritual understanding through experiencing visits to places of worship and of outstanding natural beauty. Older pupils particularly, develop a very good cultural understanding because of their work in the community and for example, through learning about the lives of the children who attend the schools they support in Africa. They all respect and value the other pupils and adults at the school and they develop a good understanding both of their school and the local community. This is confirmed for example, in their very active involvement in the school council, and in running school clubs and in enthusiastic participation in community projects such as recycling and local arts week events. The pupils develop an excellent understanding of workplace and vocational skills. Throughout the school, pupils are effectively taught basic skills, they learn to handle and use money and are encouraged to work in teams, to solve problems and organise activities. Older pupils gain outstanding experience of working life through work experience and vocational elements in the curriculum. The attendance of most pupils is good because they enjoy school so much. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were emphatic that they felt free from bullying or unpleasantness and that they really looked forward to coming to school.

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	*
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

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

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

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching standards are good throughout the school and this has a substantial impact on the pupils' achievement. The pupils understand when they have done well because their success is celebrated at the end of lessons. The oldest pupils gradually learn to take part in assessing their own work and in discussing with their teacher what they need to do to improve further. There are inconsistencies, however, in the way different teachers record each little bit of progress which the pupils make. This sometimes results in less effective recording of each small step in learning. As a result, the teachers are not always confident to sharpen pupils' overall learning targets. Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well-paced activities which motivate the pupils to do their best. The competent classroom assistants have been very well trained. Good teamwork was found throughout the school. This enables adults to give a high level of support and individual tuition to each pupil. In turn, the pupils gain the confidence to try new things and so learn faster. The management of behaviour is excellent. Pupils understand and respond to clear routines. When a pupil's behaviour occasionally becomes unacceptable, staff deal with it calmly and with understanding and support for the pupil involved.

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum which is well adapted to their needs and which is rigorously monitored for its impact on each pupil's achievement. Learning activities are always made interesting and are directly linked to each pupil's individual education plan targets. Teachers make good use of the school's information and communication resources. The pupils' communication is enhanced by means of interactive computer equipment, such as whiteboards, and through basic pre-programmed switches and vocal aids. Programmes in personal, health and social education underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the pupils' achievement in personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. The school has good provision for the development of pupils' communication and other basic skills and this is effective in promoting their confidence and their access to learning opportunities. For instance, teachers ensure that pupils with autism have full access to the curriculum, supported by

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the very well planned use of visual cues and timetables. There is a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, including residential visits and involvement with activities at other mainstream schools, which teaches them to behave appropriately in the community. This adds substantially to their social skills, their self-confidence and their interest in learning.

The school provides a very high standard of care for all of its pupils. Safeguarding procedures exceed national guidelines. Pupils are very well supported in each stage of their learning and respond with good attendance and an obvious enjoyment in their school activities. Parents receive accurate and comprehensive progress reports for review meetings and report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Pupils receive very good advice and support as they are about to leave school. This helps them effectively to manage the challenges they face as they make the transition to adult life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have continued to drive up standards of teaching and the pupils' achievements since the previous inspection. Managers effectively monitor and evaluate each aspect of the school's performance. Standards of teaching are rigorously monitored and senior staff have an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development. This is complemented by secure procedures for the performance management of all staff. There are effective procedures also to measure pupils' progress, to detect any underachievement by individuals or groups and thus to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and achieve well. Leaders robustly monitor and promote a wide range of activities which involves pupils in helping run their school and in events in the local community. Partnerships with other schools are enthusiastically pursued and very effective. A minority of pupils attend lessons at other mainstream or special schools. Two pupils, for example, are studying Entry Level art at a local secondary school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The pupils see that they can learn new things in all sorts of places and situations and they gradually develop a good understanding of the cohesiveness of the local and wider community.

Communication within the school is excellent. Staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. All staff play a full part in evaluating the school's success and they contribute on a variety of levels to the school's improvement planning. The quality of professional

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training is excellent. This makes a significant contribution to sustaining pupils' good achievement. Governors provide good support to the school. Since the previous report, they have developed and consolidated the procedures they use to monitor the school's strengths and areas for development.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The outcomes for children in this stage are satisfactory with some good features. The children enjoy their learning and join in activities enthusiastically, for instance in feeling the texture of autumn leaves. They make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in their personal development. They play safely together and they are beginning to enjoy eating healthily. There is, however, limited and underdeveloped accommodation and facilities, particularly outdoors, so that the children's learning about the wider world is sometimes inhibited. The children's language skills are developing well because of good use of signing and the appropriate use of resources to stimulate their development. Their behaviour is good. There are good links with parents and the relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Many welcoming smiles were seen from both the children and staff as pupils arrived at school. The relatively new teachers and manager have started well and have a clear vision for future development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Sixth form

The post-16 unit is a strength of the school. The leadership and management are excellent and this has focused the excellent quality of provision. There is an outstanding curriculum through which students gain every encouragement to develop their basic skills within programmes that encourage their independence and their preparation for adult life. Students make excellent progress in their personal development because of well-planned procedures to help them gain the necessary self-confidence and awareness to make their own choices.

There is outstanding teaching which results in many students continuing to make good progress in literacy and numeracy, and excellent progress in their grasp of work-related learning. Teachers make very good use of learning targets for individual pupils which are shared with the pupils and which have a very positive effect on their understanding of their own progress and how to improve their work.

The students are on target to achieve success in several units of a suitable accredited qualification. As a result of their progress, many students leave with the confidence and skills to go into further education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The relationships with parents are exceptional. Responses to the parent questionnaire were overwhelmingly very positive. Many parents reported their complete confidence in the school and the strength of the partnerships with their child's teacher. This enables them to effectively support their child's learning and has a very positive impact on the pupils' achievement. Parents' comments on questionnaires were almost all very

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supportive. For example, one parent wrote 'They have gone out of their way to listen to me as a parent' while another stated that 'The school provides great support for my child and the family.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Limington House 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	82	10	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	76	12	22	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	63	18	33	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	63	17	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	69	17	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	54	21	39	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	63	19	35	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)	33	61	15	28	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	63	18	33	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	56	15	28	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	57	20	37	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	85	8	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	74	13	24	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.



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Limington House School, Basingstoke, RG22 6PS

Not long ago my colleagues and I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make the school better. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting you in your classrooms and at lunchtime. We could see that you all enjoy school very much. We were with you for two days. That was long enough for us to realise that you go to a good school where some things are outstandingly good. Here is a list of some of the things we particularly liked about your school.

- You work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your personal development.
- The many different people at the school look after you very well.
- You do many interesting activities including those that help you become independent, make choices and learn all about different places and customs.
- All the adults work hard to give you as much help as possible and they are good at preparing interesting work for each of you.
- Your headteacher runs the school very well and everyone, including your parents, gives her strong support.

I think the school could improve even further in two ways:

- Your teachers should make sure they all write down in the same way the small improvements you make in your work. They should use this information to give you a clear idea of what you need to do to improve your work.
- The accommodation in the Early Years Foundation Stage should be improved so that the children have better opportunities to play and develop both inside and outside their classroom.

Please thank your parents for all the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes to you all

Yours faithfully

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector

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