

Wolverdene Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116635
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	338848
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Fender
Headteacher	Mr Chris Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited eight lessons and two assemblies, and held discussions with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils and a small number of parents. He observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence, including pupils' books and records of their progress, curriculum documents, the school's improvement plan and 14 parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- how well teaching meets the special educational needs and/or disabilities of all pupils across the school
- how well assessment information is used to check pupils' progress and to plan lessons to ensure they provide appropriate challenge for all pupils
- the quality and effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils
- the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its work.

Information about the school

Wolverdene Special School primarily provides education for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Several pupils have additional learning needs associated with language and communication or the acquisition of basic numeracy and literacy skills. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the overwhelming majority are boys. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and their home language is English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than the national average. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area within the town of Andover and surrounding area. The school provides an outreach service to schools and families and a social worker is based at the school. Weekly boarding is provided for up to 10 pupils. The residential provision was last inspected by a social care inspector in May 2008 and received a monitoring visit in July 2009. Extended school provision consists of a breakfast club, a summer play scheme and after-school activities organised by the residential care staff.

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

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Wolverdene School is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and its arrangements for safeguarding children now meet current government requirements. The high standard of care and broad curriculum ensure pupils enjoy school and feel safe and valued. The school is particularly successful in engaging with parents and working closely with them as partners.

Pupils generally enter the school with low academic attainment and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are still low. However, all groups of pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy and literacy skills. This is due to the combination of satisfactory teaching and a stimulating curriculum which is clearly focused on key skills and is successful in engaging pupils in learning. Specific activities designed to improve pupils' social skills and to promote their emotional development are particularly successful in ensuring pupils make excellent progress in their social development and in improving their behaviour. Very good systems are in place to recognise pupils' achievements and to help raise their self-esteem. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle, which is promoted well by regular opportunities for physical exercise and through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

Lessons are characterised by clear routines and attractive displays which create a purposeful climate for learning. However, there is variation in the quality of teaching because some of the best practice is not shared effectively across the school. The school has improved recently its use of assessment information to check pupils' progress and to set challenging targets. This information is not always used to set learning targets which are broken into small enough steps to be easily understood by pupils. As a result, sometimes activities are not matched closely to pupils' levels of ability and progress slows.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school improvement plan has appropriate priorities for moving the school forward, although the criteria for measuring the success of initiatives sometimes lack detail. The role of subject leaders in monitoring teaching and learning is underdeveloped and as a result new initiatives are not implemented consistently across the school. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. At the time of the last inspection, arrangements for safeguarding pupils were inadequate. They have improved markedly and are now good. The school has strengthened aspects of the curriculum, such as literacy, and has also begun building works to improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT)

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and to set up a school library. The governing body is supportive of the school and during the past year has been closely involved in improving arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Governors recognise that their understanding of the school's academic performance is underdeveloped, and are rightly focusing on strengthening this aspect of its work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - using assessment information more consistently to set targets which pupils understand and to match activities closely to pupils' individual levels of ability
 - ensuring the best features of teaching are shared more widely and adopted in lessons across the school.
- Implement by the end of the Spring term 2010.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders to ensure that teaching and learning and the implementation of initiatives are coordinated more effectively across the school
 - setting sharper measures of success for priorities contained in the school improvement plan
 - extending the governing body's knowledge of how to monitor and challenge the school's performance, particularly through a closer understanding of the school's academic performance.
- Implement by the end of the Summer term 2010.

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

Pupils' personal achievement is good and their academic achievement is satisfactory. Pupils leave the school with generally low standards in numeracy and literacy, although a small number gain results in national tests which are close to those expected nationally for their age. Pupils have usually encountered difficulties at their previous schools and a significant number join the school in Year 6 with low levels of attainment. While at Wolverdene all pupils, whatever their special educational need or learning difficulty, re-engage with learning, and most make good progress given their starting points on entry to the school. As a result, a few return successfully to a mainstream school each year.

Pupils' learning in the classroom is satisfactory overall, but sometimes it is good and occasionally it is outstanding. Learning and progress are best in lessons where teachers have high expectations and provide a good range of activities that capture pupils' interest. In these lessons the pace of learning is brisk; there are opportunities for pupils to actively participate, for example reading out aloud to others in the class; questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding and pupils are encouraged to discuss topics with others in the class. Learning and progress are slower in lessons where activities are

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directed too closely by the teacher, pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their own ideas and tasks are not sufficiently varied; these weaknesses result in pupils struggling to maintain interest.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated by their good attendance. In the words of one parent whose child had been unhappy at his previous school, 'He thrives academically and socially, despite having significant special educational needs.'

Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. This represents considerable progress given that pupils are referred to the school because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. At times pupils display excellent behaviour, for example when they celebrate each other's achievements in an assembly with visible delight. Whole-school opportunities to recognise pupils' successes and the consistent use of a 'grade' reward system play a major part in raising pupils' self-esteem and in promoting their excellent spiritual, moral social and cultural development. The school celebrates different religious and cultural festivals in assemblies and through topics in the religious education curriculum. It has been particularly successful in establishing links with a school in Uganda to broaden pupils' understanding of cultures in different parts of the world. Pupils play a full part in the life of the school and routinely take on responsibilities. For example, having really enjoyed a physical education lesson they were seen to eagerly put the equipment away at the end of the lesson. Some serve on the school council and others set out chairs in assembly. Pupils contribute to the wider community when they raise money for various charities and through links with the local church. Taking on these responsibilities helps to compensate for pupils' low standards in basic numeracy and literacy and gives pupils a satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

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	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

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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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	3
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Clear routines are established in all classes which ensure pupils settle quickly to their work. Teachers generally use praise and the reward system effectively to recognise effort and achievement. As a result pupils try hard and display positive attitudes to their work. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning by, for example, taking responsibility for running small groups, implementing the reward system and helping individual pupils. Teachers generally assess pupils' work regularly and record their progress, although there is inconsistency between classes in the use of this information to plan lessons. In several classes, precise targets for improvement are set and used to inform lesson planning. This ensures pupils receive suitable challenge in their learning. A very good example of this was seen in a literacy lesson during the inspection when pupils worked in pairs to develop their speaking and listening skills. In a few lessons, targets are quite broad and not easily understood by pupils. The marking of pupils' work generally includes encouraging comments, although suggestions for improvement are not always followed up.

The curriculum provides a broad range of experiences and has a very appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy and social skills. 'Circle time' and anger management groups are very successful in helping pupils to explore their feelings and manage their behaviour. Targeted individual support is also provided for pupils with language difficulties and for those who struggle with reading. Some of the wider literacy strategies have been introduced recently and are not yet embedded fully across the school. Limited use is made of ICT to support the curriculum and the school is implementing suitable plans to develop it further. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of activities in the local community, for example horse riding, sports matches against other schools, drama productions and swimming. Year 6 pupils also take part in an annual residential trip to an outdoor pursuits centre in Wales. The after-school activities organised by residential care staff make a significant contribution to the curriculum. The high standard of care is underpinned by excellent partnership with parents and carers. Staff know individual pupils very well and respond quickly to any anxieties and concerns. As one pupil commented, 'When someone is upset, staff are always there.' Pupils report they enjoy school and feel safe. They accept that incidents of misbehaviour occur, but feel they are dealt with effectively by staff. Staff have received appropriate training in behaviour management and incidents are recorded in detail. However, this information is not recorded in a way which identifies easily the causes and consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Thorough arrangements are in place to

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ensure pupils settle well when they join the school. The school social worker makes a significant contribution to pupils' care and guidance through helping pupils to manage their anger more appropriately, working closely with families and providing advice on parenting.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of pupils, which is at the heart of the school's caring ethos. The school monitors its work carefully to promote the equality of opportunity of all groups. For example, it has set up specific activities for the small minority of girls. The drive for improvement is satisfactory. The school has an effective system for checking pupils' progress and analysing the performance of different groups. As a result, underperforming pupils have been targeted for additional support and new strategies to raise standards in literacy introduced. However, the roles of subject leaders are not yet fully developed to ensure initiatives to raise standards are implemented consistently across the school.

The school has worked hard to establish a very close partnership with parents and carers. Regular contact through the home'school information books and through telephone calls ensures parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's progress. A high number of parents attend school events, such as open evenings and workshops on aspects of the curriculum. The school has established good links with partner schools, which include providing advice on teaching pupils with behavioural difficulties and receiving support to develop its ICT curriculum. The school has been successful in promoting community links at a local level and forged global links with a school in Uganda. However, current links have not yet been evaluated to ensure they take full account of the different religious, ethnic, and socio-economic groups in wider Britain.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, and include appropriate policies and staff training. The governing body ensures systems are in place to enable the school to run smoothly and finances are managed prudently. Governors are developing further their ability to monitor and challenge the school's performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	1
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	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

Views of parents and carers

Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school and some recognise how their children have improved since joining the school. In the words of one, 'Our son was excluded from his mainstream school and became very negative about learning. This has been completely turned around since attending Wolverdene and our son loves coming to school.' Additional comments include an appreciation of the school's systems for improving behaviour; the high quality of care; the professionalism and commitment of staff and the quality of education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wolverdene Special 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 inspector received 11 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 44 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	55	6	36	0	0	1	9
The school keeps my child safe	11	73	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	73	8	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	64	7	27	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	73	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	64	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	55	6	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)	11	55	6	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	73	8	18	1	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	82	9	9	1	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	73	8	18	1	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	55	6	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	82	9	9	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.



7 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wolverdene Special School, Andover SP10 2AF

Recently I visited your school to see how well it was doing. I enjoyed my visit very much and thought it was a happy and friendly school. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at the school.

Here are the main points.

- Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education and is getting better.
- You enjoy coming to school because of the interesting lessons, sporting activities and trips on offer.
- The small group and 'circle time' activities help you to make excellent progress in improving your social skills and behaviour.
- Your behaviour is good and you play an active part in the life of the school.
- The school works very closely with your parents, who are pleased with the education you receive.
- Your headteacher and other adults make sure you receive a good level of care and make sure that those of you who struggle with your work receive extra help.

I have asked the school to do a few things to make it better.

- Make sure that teachers in all classes match work closely to your level of ability so that you can make faster progress.
- Ensure teachers share some of the ideas used in the best lessons with each other.
- Make sure that adults who have responsibility for running the school check more closely how well you are getting on in lessons.

You can help by always trying your best and by telling the teacher if work is either too easy or too hard.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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