

Vale of Evesham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117058
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	338934
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend C Homan
Headteacher	Mrs A M Starr
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2007
School address	Four Pools Lane Evesham Worcestershire
Telephone number	01386 443367
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Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2009
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Boarding provision	Vale of Evesham Residential Special School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SCO43049
Social care inspector	Julian Mason

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors and a social care inspector inspecting the school's residential provision. The inspectors visited 23 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, the development plan, monitoring reports, data on pupils' progress and 55 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether the evidence of pupils' progress from the school's data and inspectors' scrutiny of progress confirm achievement is outstanding
- whether the amount of challenge provided by the targets the school sets is sufficient to raise pupils' achievement to the highest level
- how robust assessment is in ensuring pupils' work is as challenging as possible.

Information about the school

The school provides for pupils with a statement of special educational needs, which identify a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The main groups are pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. In addition, a few pupils have: behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, a sensory impairment, or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Boys far outnumber girls and nearly all pupils are White British. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, a sixth form and boarding provision for 15 pupils on a weekly basis. Twelve pupils are looked after by their local authority. The school has specialist status for cognition and learning.

The school has achieved many awards among which are Investors in People - renewed in 2009, Careers Education and Guidance Quality Mark, Artsmark, Eco School and the Healthy School Award.

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

This is a good school with a deservedly high reputation in the community. This is due to good, well-established leadership and management bringing effectiveness to educating and caring for all the pupils; the comments made by parents reflect this view strongly. The clear vision, ambition, effective management and accurate school self-evaluation of leaders account for its success. It is also due to the school's specialism, which has a significant impact on improving the provision for pupils with the most complex learning needs. Also, the help given to neighbouring schools has strengthened their provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school plays a full part in its community and is managing the promotion of all the aspects of community cohesion effectively. The drive for continual improvement is embedded; together with the strong track record since the last inspection, the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The support and care for pupils in school and boarding are outstanding because all staff are exceedingly attentive and concerned to make learners feel secure and valued. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous, and pupils feel exceptionally safe. Their personal development, confidence and self-esteem develop quickly and strongly. Pupils form positive friendships, have a high regard for others, and respect differences. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Pupils greatly enjoy school. This is shown clearly in the views they express, their good attendance and how, exceptionally, they adopt a healthy lifestyle. They achieve well, and their learning and progress are good. At times - and in the cases of particular pupils - progress is outstanding and reflects strengths in provision. This applies overall in the Nursery and Reception classes, where provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. Children make rapid progress from an excellent start to their education and development.

Teaching and assessment are good. To improve teaching, and raise progress to outstanding, assessment could be used more effectively to aid curriculum planning, and to make a closer match of pupils' current work to their next steps in learning. The good curriculum provides pupils throughout the school with interesting, challenging and relevant activities which help prepare pupils well for the future. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, work and activities, support and guidance, are focused well on students achieving a smooth transition into future placements. Provision in the sixth form is good. Students have valuable opportunities to prepare for leaving school, although not all learning opportunities encourage their independence and initiative.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Develop the use of assessment so that all pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - applying assessment information to sharpen the focus in curriculum planning
 - ensuring teachers have a detailed knowledge of pupils' next steps in learning
 - planning each pupil's work with the precision to provide them with appropriate challenges.
- Ensure that all of the work and activities in the sixth form actively encourage students' independence and initiative.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good progress is the result of effective learning in and out of lessons. The school has collected data on pupils' performance over many years, improved the accuracy of measurements, and refined the analysis and evaluation of progress. As a result, target setting is embedded and informs the planning of pupils' work. The school's benchmarks for progress, which reflect different expectations according to pupils' learning difficulties, are challenging. Pupils rise to the challenges set and sometimes exceed them as is shown, for example, by the outstanding achievement of pupils with moderate learning difficulties at the end of Key Stage 3. Those with severe learning difficulties consistently reach the targets set for them in English, mathematics and science. The rate of progress of the lowest-attaining pupils has increased as they benefit as a result of the school's specialism. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, students gain good results from accredited courses.

Pupils' behaviour is good and they express no concerns with regard to bullying or harassment. The very close attention given to their well-being ensures pupils take an acute interest in eating healthily, exercising and participating in sports. They contribute well in school, have positive regard for one another, and accept responsibilities such as in the work of the school council and as 'eco warriors'. Groups are active in raising money for a variety of good causes and join the local community in celebrations; the harvest festival is a key community event.

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

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

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	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are planned effectively and promote good learning. Occasionally, planning is not sufficiently detailed with the result that some pupils are not challenged enough by their work. More generally, challenge is good because assessment is used well to match work to pupils' capabilities. Staff know pupils well and, in a few instances, extremely systematic planning meets individual needs in impressive style, such as that for autistic pupils in Key Stage 4. Teachers and assistants work well together to support pupils. Many teaching assistants are accomplished in taking a lead in lessons and, in particular, promote the learning of less-able pupils. The quality of teaching and learning suffered in a very few instances because the challenging behaviour of one or two pupils was not managed successfully.

The curriculum puts an effective emphasis on meeting the wide range of pupils' needs, leading to the development of substantial staffing expertise and good resources. The successful sensory curriculum and provision for pupils' communication needs, promoted by the school's specialism, enable most pupils to make good progress in developing basic skills. The breadth of the curriculum encompasses a good range of interesting, relevant work and activities matched to pupils' ages and talents. Learning is enriched considerably by extra-curricular activities, cultural experiences and residential trips. The curriculum equips Key Stage 4 and sixth form students well with the knowledge, skills and experiences to expand their options when they leave school.

Pupils are able to depend on adults for support, encouragement and reassurance. Outstanding provision is enhanced by excellent links with parents, external agencies and the availability in school of a nurse, and a speech and language therapist. Pupils are closely monitored and their progress is reviewed regularly. The procedures for managing behaviour are systematic and identified pupils are helped effectively. At the times when pupils make significant moves in their school career, the transition arrangements are outstanding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	
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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
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 headteacher, senior management team and leaders across the school have an exceptional impact on several aspects of the school's work, which leads to some outstanding outcomes and provision. High expectations, a common sense of purpose and a broad vision for the school permeate its work. Governors play an active part in supporting the school's work and its involvement with the community. Specialist status has been a successful challenge, particularly in helping other schools and also many parents by equipping them with the skills to encourage their children's communication. The concern to make improvements in provision for these pupils reflects the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Links with parents and partnerships with schools, colleges and agencies are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation, continuous planning for improvement and target-setting are at the heart of leadership; these are carried out with rigour. Improvement planning is structured effectively with clearly delineated actions that bring about successful developments.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	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	2
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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Strong, well-focused leadership has created outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff set children high expectations with the result that most make excellent progress in all the areas of learning. Children are cared for exceptionally well; their needs are understood thoroughly and the knowledge that staff have of them is used very effectively to plan challenging activities. Consequently, children have many opportunities to learn to communicate, with staff prompting speaking and listening skills or teaching signing. Children's social skills develop extremely well from the strong emphasis on working and playing together. The excellent curriculum is well tailored to children's needs and makes very effective use of outdoor areas, especially to encourage physical development and mobility skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Good leadership provides an effective sixth form programme of study. This leads to students' good progress and achievement. The curriculum offers a broad range of choices which include accredited course options matching students' capabilities. It also offers a good balance of academic and vocational options, supported by learning opportunities in the community, at colleges and through work-experience placements. Students' interests and needs are well met. They enjoy the sixth form and, as a group, get on very well with each other. Their social interaction is mature and prepares them well for life after sixth form. In most respects the sixth form gives students challenges which encourage them to make choices, exercise initiative and find independence. A few lessons that are led predominantly by the teacher leave students too passive, limiting their opportunities for independent learning and using initiative.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding is outstanding, exceeding many National Minimum Standards. No recommendations were made from the school's last welfare inspection. The quality of care is exceptional because the residential team are very knowledgeable and provide a supportive, safe and nurturing environment. Staff pay particular attention to developing young people's communication skills.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's care and support are underpinned by clearly written policies that promote inclusion and equality. Staff collect a comprehensive range of information to ensure the support provided is effective. Young people are treated fairly and with equal concern. This means that staff fully promote young people's social inclusion and prevent any form of discrimination or unfairness.

Young people's health and well-being is closely monitored. The school works in partnership with a range of services that link with the school nurse, teachers, families, residential staff as well as community health professionals. Staff and families are well informed about the changing health needs and circumstances of each young person. This helps staff adapt plans and arrangements for the management of complex and frequently changing needs like diabetes and epilepsy. Practice routines for the administration of medication are well established. There are a small number of gaps in the medication records that do not match some prescription instructions. Young people are receiving their medication but, occasionally, the records do not reflect this.

Food and meal-time arrangements are excellent. Any religious, cultural, dietary or individual preferences are incorporated into menus. Young people are helped to stay fit and healthy; they exercise regularly because they participate in a range of physical activities that are fun and engaging.

Young people feel very safe in their residential units. Staff have completed the necessary checks which ensure they are suitable to work young people. The school has an excellent focus on safeguarding. This is because there are clear policies that are communicated effectively to promote young people's welfare. Managers have effective links and work in partnership with the child protection agencies. All staff have received child protection training. They know what their roles and responsibilities are and what to do if they have a concern about a young person.

Young people are provided with very useful guidance and support about how to manage their behaviour. Staff are very positive in their approach to behaviour management because they are trained and very experienced.

Each young person receives focused, individual support from staff. Young people's needs are well known because staff have access to a detailed and comprehensive range of information. In addition, good relationships enable staff to gain further understanding about individual needs. The residential routines and approach fully support young people to be successful learners, develop their life skills and promote independence. Close working partnerships between teaching and care staff offer great consistency and

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continuity for young people throughout the school day.

Young people are fully supported to maintain contact with their families. Parents and carers receive regular progress reports and staff stay in regular touch to keep them informed of events and developments. Family contact and information sharing contribute to young people being settled and happy.

The residential accommodation is well maintained, very clean and tidy with good-quality decor and furnishings. Young people's bedrooms are highly personalised, decorated and furnished with their own possessions and personal items. The accommodation and personal-care routines are organised in a way that respects young people's privacy. Young people are provided with homely and comfortable boarding accommodation.

- the residential provision has outstanding leadership that consistently promotes an environment where young people's safety and welfare are paramount. Managers know what the school does well and what areas need to be developed. For instance, lunchtime arrangements have been modernised, young people have access to a new sensory room, photographs of events and activities are added to personal diaries so parents have a better representation of what goes on at school. In addition, the quality of individual communication profiles has been improved and there is increased access to recreational activities. The senior management team have a clear agenda on maintaining and improving services that are necessary in meeting each young person's needs. Many of the developments are viewed positively and are as a result of staff listening to the views and opinions of young people.

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

- Ensure a written record is kept of all medication administered to young people. (NMS 14)

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Responses in the parental questionnaires almost entirely agree that the school is effective in educating and supporting pupils. Responses are strongly in agreement with regard to how the school keeps children safe, the quality of teaching and leadership and management. Inspectors have found the extent to which children feel safe and the school's safeguarding procedures are both outstanding. They found also that teaching and leadership and management are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Vale of Evesham 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	75	13	24	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	80	11	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	65	18	33	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	60	20	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	82	10	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	64	17	31	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	65	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)	30	55	22	40	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	73	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	69	12	22	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	62	17	31	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	85	6	11	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	89	6	11	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.



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Vale of Evesham School, Evesham, WR11 1BN

Inspectors really enjoyed their visit to your school. You were friendly, welcoming and helpful, which we appreciated. I would like to thank the group of pupils who met an inspector to share their views of school.

Your school is good because you are taught well and make good progress. By the time you are ready to leave school you have achieved well in examinations. There are many things that are outstanding. Children in the Nursery and Reception class make excellent progress because their work and activities are excellent. The extent to which all of you feel safe and enjoy a healthy lifestyle are also outstanding. The staff in school and in boarding are excellent in caring and supporting all of you.

Inspectors were pleased to hear how much you enjoy your work and activities at school. We think they are interesting and useful as a good preparation for the future. Students in the sixth form are learning well so that they can go on to other opportunities successfully.

The headteacher and all of the staff are keen to continue improving your school. They are determined that the progress of every one of you is to be outstanding.

I have recommended some steps the headteacher and staff can take to improve the school. These are:

- to use what they know about your progress to plan your work more precisely to help you succeed in taking the next steps in learning
- to make sure students in the sixth form have every opportunity to take charge of their learning and solve problems by themselves and not be helped too much by adults.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon

Lead Inspector

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