

The Collett School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117672
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339043
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Farrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary Macey
Headteacher	Ms Elaine Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning. Some 13 lessons were observed, 11 teachers were seen and meetings were held with parents, pupils, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at the school development plan, various policies and data on progress and other information, and scrutinised 69 parental questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of leadership and management in the primary and secondary phases
- attendance and strategies to improve it
- the effectiveness of teaching for pupils with different learning needs including moderate learning difficulties and autism.

Information about the school

The Collett School educates pupils from the borough of Dacorum and surrounding areas in south Hertfordshire. Most pupils have both moderate learning and additional difficulties. The number of pupils with complex needs, including autism and speech/language and emotional/behavioural difficulties, has increased over recent years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils referred to the primary phase is decreasing. For some years the Early Years Foundation Stage has educated a very small number of pupils. Around 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has maintained its Healthy Schools Award since the previous inspection.

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

The Collett School offers good provision. Parents speaking for many say the school is 'the best place we ever could have picked'. It keeps them excellently informed through 'books, leaflets and photographs of what the children have done'. Good leadership and management in all phases and close teamwork of senior managers, reinforced by coherent school development planning, give the school a clear forward momentum. Safeguarding policies and procedures are carefully implemented and supported by regular training. Thorough and manageable assessment enables the school to identify children needing further help, giving all pupils equal opportunities to succeed. Good promotion of community cohesion underpins the school's welcoming ethos. The governing body provides committed support and challenge.

Good teaching at the school is characterised by strong relationships between staff and pupils, good use of assessment, clear planning, and activities and styles well suited to pupils' varying needs. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution but best use is not always made of their skills when teachers are speaking to the whole class, and this sometimes slows pupils' progress. The good curriculum provides a framework of relevant, practical and interesting activities that sustain pupils' good progress and development. Visits, visitors, themed days and clubs enrich the curriculum while strong cross-curricular links ensure its coherence. Strong ties with mainstream schools and colleges extend provision.

Good care, guidance and support within an encouraging ethos helps pupils do well. Strong partnerships with other schools and agencies such as the health service contribute well to good outcomes. The school works hard to improve the low attendance of younger children, but its strategies are not always rigorously monitored and evaluated. All groups of pupils enjoy school and learn well, making good progress, especially in developing communication and social skills. Pupils feel safe, act considerately, and behave well. They eat healthily, participate in exercise, and know they can confide in staff. They participate fully in the school and local community. Their social development is especially strong because the school promotes it very well. Pupils' economic well-being is supported well by progress in developing basic skills, including excellent social skills. Effective leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure good provision, where children are happy and make good progress.

Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully responded to changes in its intake and leadership and governance and have been strengthened. The school has a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, and a good capacity to continue to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers deploy teaching assistants fully when the teacher is speaking to the whole class.
- Improve attendance in the primary phase by rigorously monitoring and evaluating strategies to ensure they are as effective as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Individuals and groups of pupils, including both boys and girls, pupils from Black and minority ethnic groups, and those with moderate learning difficulties, autism and challenging behaviour all learn well. Some individual pupils make outstanding progress and pupils generally make very strong progress in developing communication and social skills, which the school prioritises. They achieve well and enjoy school considerably. Pupils feel safe and act considerately. Occasional challenging behaviour has little effect on lessons because it is handled well. In a good art lesson, Year 9 pupils made 'modroc' models and drew the results with care and increasing confidence, learning effectively and progressing well because they were absorbed in the well-planned activity and strongly supported by the teacher and teaching assistant. In a good ICT lesson, lower ability pupils in Years 10 and 11 learned to create a class timetable, progressing well because they concentrated hard, behaved well and were effectively supported. Pupils take an active part in the school council and in a range of activities locally, including with special and mainstream schools. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is average overall; it is above average in the secondary phase but below average in the primary phase, in part but not solely because of absences for medical reasons.

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.

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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but were mainly good. Staff are careful to make distinctive provision for pupils with specific needs. For example, good use is made of visual symbols where necessary to help pupils with autism to understand what will happen next. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning and development well, but teachers do not always make full use of teaching assistants' skills, particularly when addressing the whole class.

The broad, well-considered curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Activities such as themed days and after-school clubs help to enrich the provision. Cross-curricular links are well established and help bind the curriculum together into a coherent whole. The range of accreditation is under regular review and the school is always looking for further suitable courses. Links with mainstream schools and colleges of further education help extend the range of the curriculum.

Pupils' progress is assessed well and appropriate steps are taken when it is found to be too slow. For example, the school has successfully introduced smaller groupings for older pupils in which they can concentrate on key skills. The school works effectively with partners including other services such as the health service to provide well for pupils. The school is successful in promoting attendance for older pupils, but strategies for improving the attendance of younger pupils are not monitored closely enough to ensure their effectiveness.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has responded well to the challenge of smaller numbers of pupils in the primary phase and to admitting pupils with increasingly diverse needs. Changes to the organisation of groups and new staffing structures are having a positive effect, and staff at all levels are clearly focused on improvement. The school and governors know the school's strengths and areas to develop and good school development planning reflects this. The governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met well, including those relating to safeguarding. Staff know pupils extremely well and effectively tailor activities and support to individual needs. Excellent promotion of equal opportunities is at the heart of the school's work. Partnerships with other agencies and schools are good because the school puts considerable effort into working with partners. Parents are well engaged and value the school enormously. Provision for community cohesion is carefully planned, monitored and evaluated, although international aspects are not as strongly developed as local and national strands. The school manages pupils' behaviour well, but does not always monitor and evaluate instances of challenging behaviour rigorously in order to refine its interventions. With good provision, leadership and outcomes, the school provides good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress towards their learning goals. Staff know children very well and make sure work

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and play activities are well pitched so they effectively extend learning and development. The children enjoy the well-organised setting and their confidence grows in the warm ethos. The arrangement of including Early Years Foundation Stage pupils in a class with pupils aged 5 to 7 works well because they see what older children can do and try harder. Independence, making choices and communication are all encouraged well and visual symbols including timetables are effectively used to assist this aspect of learning. The broad and interesting curriculum meets requirements well and helps ensure activities are suitably pitched at the right level for each child. Good leadership and management create high staff morale and ensure staff work together well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very appreciative of what the school provides. All agreed that the school keeps their child safe, and that teaching is good. Several stated that they felt some groups were too large. A small proportion of parents expressed other individual concerns. The highest number of negative responses was about children not making enough progress. Inspectors found no evidence to support these critical views. The parents who met inspectors were very strongly supportive of the school and the way it had transformed the lives of their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Collett 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	56	24	34	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	39	59	25	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	53	28	42	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	47	25	38	8	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	58	27	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	48	29	44	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	47	32	48	1	2	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	45	28	42	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	62	20	30	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	53	28	42	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	50	27	41	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	59	22	33	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	70	17	26	2	3	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.



8 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Collett School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1TQ

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we inspected your good school recently, and for telling us what you thought about the school. You told us about many activities you enjoyed.

We found many good things. The school is led and managed well, teaching and the curriculum are both good, you are cared for and supported well, and you make good progress in your learning and development.

There are two things the school could do better so I have asked the staff to:

- make sure teaching assistants are clear about what they have to do when the teacher is speaking to you as a whole class
- improve the attendance of younger children by keeping track of the best ways of encouraging attendance.

I am sure younger children and their parents will want to help the school to make sure attendance is as good as it can be.

Every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell

Lead inspector

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