

Morecambe Road School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119876
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339540
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lillian Shaw
Headteacher	Mr Paul Edmondson
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed and 14 teachers seen. More than a half of inspection time was spent observing and analysing pupils' learning. Discussions were held with a governor and many pupils and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including assessment records, the school improvement plan, curriculum planning and recent minutes of governing body meetings. Thirty-nine parental questionnaires were analysed along with many from pupils and staff.

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

- the level of challenge in lessons for pupils of differing ability
- the impact of high turnover in staffing on the quality of teaching
- the impact of changes made to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the range of opportunities for inclusion available to pupils.

Information about the school

All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most have moderate learning difficulties but a growing proportion have more severe learning difficulties. There are increasing numbers of those with autistic spectrum disorders and with speech, language and communication disorders, and smaller groups of pupils covering a wide range of other special educational needs and/or disabilities. Boys outnumber girls by about 3 to 1. Most pupils are White British. There are nine looked after children. Pupils can be admitted at any time and at any age. Those admitted to the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 often display the greatest degree of complexity of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils joining later are usually those transferring from mainstream schools, usually at the beginning of Year 7, when schools or parents have expressed concerns about their ability to cope with mainstream secondary education.

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 school is adapting well to changes in the needs of the pupils for whom it provides education. Over the last three years the turnover of teaching staff has been approximately 30%, as longer serving staff, including the headteacher, have either retired or gained promoted posts in other schools. After initial difficulties caused by this disruption, the changes have been turned to advantage. Through good leadership and management of teaching, new teachers, including three who were newly qualified on their appointment, are developing specialist skills to help pupils achieve well. Behaviour is good and attendance is improving. Senior leaders, managers and governors show a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gained through good, perceptive self-evaluation. All these factors contribute to the school's good capacity to keep on improving.

The school works extremely effectively with many other professionals and support agencies. These excellent links contribute significantly to the outstanding care, guidance and support that pupils receive. Great care is taken to prepare pupils for changes as they pass through the school and in the run up to them leaving school. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to engage with those from other schools, including mainstream schools and colleges.

There is a very wide range of ability and complexity of need in nearly all classes. The school has successfully created a discrete class for Year 7 pupils with autism and can see the benefit of extending this grouping of pupils by their specific needs rather than purely by age.

Much of teaching in the special class for Year 7 pupils with autism is especially skilled. However, across the rest of the school the range of strategies for helping pupils to communicate by whatever means possible is more limited. This is a particularly important area for development with the growing numbers of pupils with autism and speech, language and communication disorders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Devise ways of narrowing the range of ability in each class.
- Improve teaching and learning through more consistent promotion of communication strategies such as through greater use of signs, symbols and pictures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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The nature of pupils' special educational needs and/or disability means that attainment is usually low: pupils who make sufficient progress towards meeting national expectations are invariably returned to mainstream schools to be replaced by other pupils whose ability is lower. Achievement, however, is good. From their low starting points pupils make good progress and all gain qualifications before they leave. In lessons, pupils work hard and behave well. They enjoy joining in with discussions and are keen to make their views known. They are proud of their achievements. The most able pupils gain passes at the lower grades in GCSE English, mathematics and art. The more usual measure of success is in assessments aimed at pupils performing closer to Level 2 or 3 of the National Curriculum.

A very large majority of pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe there. This is understandable because behaviour is good and pupils are well cared for. Serious misbehaviour is rare and usually related to factors which define the nature of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Many take part enthusiastically in physical and adventurous activities. The school council has been involved in developing healthy lunchtime menus but the contents of some packed lunches are clearly not chosen to provide healthy diets.

Attendance does not meet the national average for all schools but it is higher than the average for all special schools and it is improving. Unauthorised absence is rare. Older pupils have many opportunities to develop important skills that prepare them for leaving school. These include a very successful and popular horticultural skills course.

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
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

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 develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are well taught. There are instances of outstanding teaching and any that is less than satisfactory is very rare. The turnover in teaching staff has been managed well so as to maintain the quality of teaching. Staff currently share a good range of experience, skill and enthusiasm. Skills continue to improve through an extensive programme of professional development. There is wide variation in teachers' use of signing, symbols and pictures to promote communication. Teachers manage classrooms well, utilising the skills of support staff to make sure that all pupils share equal opportunities to learn. Work is usually varied well to meet different needs. The challenge of doing this is considerable in classes which can number over 15 pupils with a range of ability ranging from pre National Curriculum to Level 3. It is significant that some of the best teaching in the school is in a class where pupils have been grouped primarily by type and level of need. The marking of pupils' work is conscientious and often characterised by helpful guidance about how work could be improved.

Pupils enjoy the broad range of subjects and activities provided through the curriculum. There is a good focus on promoting the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and an extensive programme of personal, social and health education permeates the whole curriculum. Many lessons are characterised by practical activities and imaginative use of resources, well suited to the needs and interests of pupils. Older pupils in particular have good opportunities to spend some of their lessons being taught alongside mainstream pupils. Pupils have particularly enjoyed visits to the Tate gallery in Liverpool and to Chester Zoo. Residential visits to outdoor adventure centres are a regular feature of the school calendar, again very much enjoyed by pupils.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Communication with parents is good and multi-agency working is a strength of the school. This is hugely important, given the complications many pupils and their families face. Care is taken to deploy teaching assistants to help those pupils with the greatest need for support. Staff representatives always attend the reviews of looked after children and liaise closely with carers. Pupils are well prepared for each successive stage of their education or each change of class and are given good advice to help them transfer successfully to other schools or colleges when the time comes for them to leave Morecambe Road. Extensive work is done to reduce absence by working closely with parents and carers and rewarding pupils for good attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Morale in the school is good. This is a significant achievement given the many changes the school has undergone in a relatively short space of time. New staff have been successfully assimilated into the school and the good staff team shares a common sense of purpose. Change has been sympathetically and well managed and improvement is picking up pace as subject leaders contribute increasingly effectively to the development and monitoring of their areas of responsibility. Governors have been highly supportive and are increasingly contributing to school self-evaluation with governors taking special responsibility for specific areas such as child protection, special educational needs, literacy and numeracy. The governing body has special expertise in health and safety and the safeguarding and protection of pupils. All staff have been trained in child protection and all new staff have an induction period to ensure that they are aware of policies and procedures. All pupils share equal opportunities and the school is fully aware of the strains imposed by the growing range of needs and abilities in each class. Community cohesion is well promoted. The community of the school is tightly knit and care is taken to avoid it becoming insular. Expertise is regularly shared with staff and pupils from other schools. It is, for instance, currently the lead school in the district for the Level 1 diploma in Environmental and Land Based Studies. On the international front, the school has developed links with schools in many other countries including e-mail and cultural links with a school in Nepal.

Excellent partnerships have been developed with a wide range of other organisations. One such, is a local children's centre with which the school has developed a highly successful summer play scheme. Extensive links with health and mental health services contribute enormously to the care and support of pupils. Many links with other schools facilitate increased curricular opportunities, not only for Morecambe Road pupils but also for their peers in those schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	2
	2
<p>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</p>	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	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	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 Early Years Foundation Stage has undergone considerable development over the past year. From very low starting points, children make good progress. The biggest changes are seen in the development of personal and social skills where good progress is reflected in children becoming more proficient in feeding and dressing themselves. They learn the importance of sharing and the importance of making correct choices. Provision is good and improving. There has been considerable investment in developing the outdoor learning environment and refurbishing the classroom to create different learning areas. The assessment of children's progress is accurate and rigorous. Teaching is often good but is occasionally weakened when it becomes over formal and prescriptive rather than allowing children more opportunities to learn through play and experiment. The care guidance and support of children is of the same excellent quality as in the rest of the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed. Parents have commented on how pleased they have been with the arrangements made to help their children settle in quickly. Excellent links exist between parents and staff and also with many other professionals and agencies involved in the care and support of children and families.

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

Most parents and carers are very pleased with the ways in which the school is helping their children. Parents and carers are unanimous in saying that the school keeps their

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children safe. The very large majority feel that they are kept well informed about the progress their children are making and that the school is well led and managed. A small minority express concerns about the way in which behaviour is managed and a very small minority feel their children are not making enough progress.

Inspectors support the positive views of parents. They feel that although there is a little misbehaviour at times it is well managed and that this is one of the reasons their children feel safe in school. Nearly all pupils are making good progress even if it is not quite as good as the small minority of parents would appreciate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Morecambe Road 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 155 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	60	17	34	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	33	66	17	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	62	16	32	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	52	16	32	5	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	30	60	14	28	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	50	18	36	5	10	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	48	20	40	2	4	1	2
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)	22	44	20	40	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	58	16	32	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	44	21	42	5	10	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	50	19	38	4	8	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	54	15	30	3	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	66	13	26	4	8	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



26 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morecambe Road School, Morecambe, LA3 3AB

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school a while ago. You contributed a lot to our inspection by behaving well and being so polite when you talked to us. That created a very good impression. We liked the way you work hard in lessons and try to do the best work you can. That is why Morecambe Road is a good school.

We think you are well taught and that is why you make good progress. It is good to see how proud you are of your achievements. Your timetable is nicely varied and you have lots of good opportunities to learn in places other than just your classrooms. We feel you are exceptionally well looked after in school and have every reason to feel happy and safe.

One of our jobs is to make some suggestions about how we feel your school could become even better. It was not easy but we noticed that some of your classes are very large and that a lot of you in each class have very different needs. This makes it harder and harder for staff to ensure that you are all getting what you need. We also noticed that only a few of you were being encouraged to use different forms of communication such as signing or pointing to symbols to make yourselves understood. Staff are going to make improvements in both these areas.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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