

Mowbray School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121779
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	340008
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Dunning
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Tearle
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and saw nine teachers for 60% of the inspection time. They also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and school leaders. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's improvement plans, safeguarding documents, curriculum and lesson plans and questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils
- school records for tracking pupils' progress
- the school's community cohesion policy and planning.

Information about the school

Mowbray School is located in the market town of Bedale. It has a very large catchment area which encompasses five military bases. As a result, a higher than average number of pupils leave or join the school midway through their education. Pupils who attend come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and broadly average numbers are eligible to receive free school meals. All have a statement of special educational needs. Although the school is designated for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, a significant number of pupils currently attending have been diagnosed as having autistic spectrum disorder. A large number of pupils have severe learning and behavioural difficulties and eight are looked after by the local authority. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and boys represent 75% of the school's population. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Sportsmark, Activemark, Artsmark Silver and Enquiry School Status, awarded by the Creative Schools partnership. The school farm is registered with the school farm network. The school is subject to reorganisation.

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

Mowbray is a good school. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided for all pupils and the success with which their complex special needs are met enable them to make good progress both personally and academically. The headteacher, senior leaders and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and ensure the good quality of provision necessary for them to do so. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is rigorous and staff act on the findings to good effect. However, as yet, self-evaluation does not extend to evaluating the impact of the school's strategies to promote community cohesion. The success of the school and its improvement since the last inspection, for example in ensuring that all senior leaders are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and homework is set regularly, indicate a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils arrive at school with gaps in their learning and lowered self-esteem. As they begin to enjoy learning, their confidence in themselves as learners is rebuilt. They then begin to show mature attitudes and a willingness to share responsibilities in school. This results in a cohesive, purposeful and happy community where pupils enjoy working hard and contribute exceptionally well to the local community.

The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the needs of individuals and is exceptionally well balanced to support academic, personal and vocational needs. It is creatively enhanced by a wide and varied number of activities out of school and residential visits which offer pupils excellent opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding both in and outside the classroom. Older students respond especially well to the practical and vocational nature of the exceptionally wide choice of courses offered. This, coupled with an emphasis on academic subjects for the more able, ensures that students leave Year 11 with qualifications which prepare them well for the next phase of education or work. Many younger pupils settle very quickly and start to engage with learning and, as a result, they make good progress, often exceeding previous targets. Pupils achieve well across both the primary and secondary sectors of the school. However, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make only satisfactory progress within the six areas of learning. This is because they have too few opportunities to engage in active learning. As a result, their progress slows and achievement is less good.

Pupils are adamant that they feel safe because staff in the school are always there to support them. They feel listened to and are confident that when problems occur they can confide in staff who, for example, deal effectively with any isolated incidents of bullying. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school immensely and this is demonstrated by their good attendance.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that children have access to a range of activities which promote active learning both in the classroom and outside
 - ensuring that adults record accurately their observations of children's achievements
 - ensuring that the planning of activities fully reflects all areas of learning and matches the needs of all children.
- Refine its audit of community cohesion, taking full account of religious, ethnic and socio-economic contexts, to ensure that pupils fully appreciate differences between groups in the wider community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good achievements are the result of their hard work and positive attitudes and, as a result, they are well prepared for the future. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is evident in the way they approach activities. Virtually all pupils achieve their challenging targets and many exceed them. In an outstanding drama lesson using music and puppets, pupils' hard work and good attitudes contributed strongly to their developing self-esteem, memory and observational skills. The school caters for individual pupils very effectively and ensures that different groups, such as those with complex medical or behavioural needs, all achieve well.

Pupils respond very positively to the school's calm and purposeful ethos. Times of quiet reflection, for example in assembly, make a strong contribution to their very supportive attitudes towards each other and their good behaviour. Pupils say they feel '100% safe in school' because everyone knows everyone else. The school's Healthy Schools, Sportsmark and Activemark awards are evidence of pupils' good understanding of the need to make healthy choices. Pupils particularly enjoy the extensive range of activities and learning opportunities on offer which so successfully build their self-esteem. As one said: 'I'll really miss it when I leave. Before I didn't think I could do what I wanted to do. Now I know I can.'

Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school. They work hard on initiatives to improve the school environment and local community. Activities include tending the planters in the town square and creating a nature reserve on adjoining land. In a wider context pupils act very successfully as ambassadors for the school, recently meeting representatives from the local authority to discuss the role of their school council.

As a result of opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, their spiritual understanding is excellent. For example, pupils' art work in the style of Mackenzie Thorpe demonstrated some outstanding spiritual representation of their family members' personalities. Their appreciation of the differences and similarities among different groups in society is less strong.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ The quality of pupils' learning and their progress The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
	*
	2
	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Staff assess pupils' progress well against challenging targets. Pupils learn to take part in assessing their own work and this increases their determination to succeed. Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting and well-paced activities which motivate all to do their best. Support staff are well trained and work effectively with teachers as part of the team. This ensures that a high level of support and individual tuition is given to each pupil. In turn, the pupils gain the confidence to try new things and so they learn faster. The management of behaviour is good in most lessons and pupils respond well to the clear routines. However, when too long is spent on one activity, particularly at the start of a lesson, pupils' behaviour becomes less good and their learning slows.

The school's excellent curriculum is carefully constructed to offer as wide a range of

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

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

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activities as possible. As a result, pupils all leave with qualifications which allow them to access further education or the world of work. Strong partnerships with the local high school result in more able pupils accessing a range of GCSE courses. Opportunities for vocational studies are very well developed and include learning skills in carpentry, construction and agriculture through the aptly named 'super curriculum'. Pupils greatly appreciate these opportunities since, as one said: 'It's not just pen and paper learning here. You learn about life.' Art is a particular strength of the school and offers many creative enrichment opportunities for learners of all ages. These include trips to museums and the Northumberland coast as well as developing pupils' cultural understanding of Oriental and Aboriginal art. Personal, health and social education underpins much of the school's work and every opportunity is taken to improve pupils' personal skills through a very wide range of out-of-school activities, including residential visits.

The school provides a very high standard of care for all pupils, particularly those who face challenging circumstances. As a result, vulnerable pupils are supported in each stage of their learning and personal development by school staff and a wide range of other professionals. Staff provide parents and carers with accurate and comprehensive progress reports and parents' and carers' questionnaires show a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. Strong partnerships with Connexions service advisers provide pupils with excellent advice and support about future opportunities. As a result, they make a smooth transition to the next stage of their lives.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have a strong vision for the future and have clearly identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders' active engagement in self-evaluation has led to an increased ownership of the school's vision for the future and, as a result, the school has a good capacity for continued improvement. The role of governors is well developed and, as a direct result of their very thorough recent audit, they are well equipped both to support and to challenge senior leaders for the benefit of school improvement. Safeguarding pupils is at the heart of the school's inclusive ethos, and issues surrounding pupils' safety and welfare are addressed thoroughly in line with statutory requirements.

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The school's outstanding relationship with parents and carers is exemplified by the way that it provides transport for some parents and carers in order to support them in attending their children's review meetings. Equality of opportunity for all learners is well promoted throughout school. The school works effectively to promote cohesion within the local community but acknowledges that it does not yet evaluate the impact of its work or extend it to help deepen pupils' understanding of diversity in the wider community.

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	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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children attending the school's Early Years Foundation Stage unit make satisfactory progress. They enjoy attending school and parents and carers say they settle quickly because of the calm and friendly attitudes of staff. They learn to take turns and to be friendly and sociable towards each other and adults. However, there are too few opportunities for them to make independent learning choices because activities do not always reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning sufficiently well, particularly in the outside area of the provision. As a result, children's progress is slowed. All adults, especially individuals' key workers, ensure that children are safe and well cared for in the setting. Welfare procedures, including first aid certification, meet current requirements. Fruit choices at snack times suitably promote healthy eating and children make safe decisions when using outdoor equipment.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Staff do record their observations of children's achievements but these are often descriptive and do not link effectively to Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning.

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Children's progress is tracked but links to the planning of future learning activities are not robust. However, school leaders are aware the strengths and areas for improvement in the provision and have clear plans for improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children enjoy coming to school and that the school keeps them safe. A large majority also consider that the school keeps them well informed and meets the needs of their children well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mowbray 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	69	20	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	78	16	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	64	25	34	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	55	30	41	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	73	20	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	62	27	36	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	62	26	35	1	1	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)	50	68	19	26	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	72	17	23	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	69	23	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	64	25	34	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	74	19	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	77	14	19	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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 pupils' 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.



04 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mowbray School, Bedale, DL8 2SD

Thank you very much for making myself and the other inspector so welcome when we visited you recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your school. We were very pleased to hear how proud you are of your school and how much you enjoy coming.

Here are just a few of the things that your school does particularly well.

- It helps you to feel safe and become confident members of the community.
- It ensures that you all leave with as many qualifications as possible by providing lots of different courses for you to choose from.
- It gives you as many opportunities as possible to visit different places to experience different things as well as making learning fun and exciting.

We have asked your teachers to do the following things to improve your school.

- Help children when they first start school to learn quickly by carefully planning different activities.
- Ensure that senior teachers look at the work you are doing on appreciating the differences between groups of people in the wider community so that they know how much impact this is having.

We would both like to wish you all the best for the future and hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

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