

Portesbery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125474
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340774
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Scott

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Carpenter
Headteacher	Mr Justin Price
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
School address	Portesbery Road Camberley GU15 3SZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Nine lessons were observed. Meetings took place with groups of students, staff, leaders and governors in the school. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of the school's documentation, including the students' progress tracking information and questionnaires from 41 parents and carers, as well as from teachers and students.

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

- the impact of the school's focus on inclusion
- the impact of the developing sixth form provision on student outcomes.

Information about the school

Portesbery School is a day school for students with severe and profound learning difficulties, many of whom have autistic spectrum disorders. The varied ethnic heritages of the students in this small school reflect the diverse community served across a large catchment area. There is a larger proportion of students believed to be eligible for free school meals than found nationally.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Portesbery is an outstanding school which has a very strong sense of community. The team are clear and successful in their drive to provide high quality experiences for all students. The phenomenal outcomes in developing increased independence for students are central to the school's work.

Students' progress is tracked well by the school, and staff know students extremely well on an individual basis. This depth of understanding, combined with a high level of staff expertise, leads to tailored learning opportunities and ensures that students are very well cared for and are challenged to achieve more.

Teaching teams work well together, and both teachers and teaching assistants lead aspects of learning within the classroom, providing very high quality and varied learning opportunities. These include very skilled use of the Picture Exchange communication Systems (PECS), clear and highly effective behaviour management strategies, and teaching methods that are carefully adapted to individual needs.

Students are shown a high degree of respect and dignity and are given a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. This enhances their confidence and independence. Well-established systems in the school successfully promote healthy lifestyles, safety and security, and this is reflected in the high level of trust students have in staff. This also prepares students very well to engage in learning opportunities beyond the realms of their current experiences when they move on to other settings in the wider community.

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Governors contribute a great deal to the school and are active in supporting and challenging practice. The school has a very well-distributed leadership structure that promotes individual talents and ensures that all members of staff contribute in a variety of ways, regardless of their position in the school. Staff are valued and their high level of morale reflects the school's success. The capacity for further improvement is therefore outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Refine teaching by ensuring that all staff systematically provide increasingly complex challenge for students in planned activities.
- Enhance the assessment systems to further define the difference between good and outstanding progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

In Portesbery School students' achievement in its widest sense is outstanding. Students' personal development and understanding of how to operate independently are key to their learning, and are tracked very well with clear monitoring systems for each individual. Students thoroughly enjoy school and readily engage in challenging activities that ensure they all make excellent progress towards individual targets, regardless of their specific needs or ability levels. They make a wide range of choices and the school helps them to develop a wider understanding of how these choices influence their lives and the lives of others. For example, in the context of healthy living they develop an understanding about how they can manage both physical and mental health. Behaviour in the school is outstanding as students fully subscribe to the positive and caring ethos of the school, often demonstrating empathy for fellow students and for staff.

A wide range of inclusion opportunities ensure that students are successful in working in a variety of contexts, both social and academic. The enthusiasm students have for these new experiences highlights the trust they place in staff, which encourages them to safely take risks in their learning. Students successfully progress academically and this success builds confidence that allows them to grow and develop, working well with students from other schools. This aspect of the school's work also ensures that they successfully complete externally accredited courses and develop their key skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT. Some students require extended periods of absence for professional support such as medical interventions. Considering this, attendance is good. All of these factors contribute significantly to students' economic well-being and future reduced dependency on other adults.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and enhanced by opportunities to study and to experience other cultures such as through visits to local restaurants and places of worship. The hatching of chicks and the metamorphosis of caterpillars to butterflies help to give students a wider sense of the wonders of life as well as the science and beauty involved.

Students are also well prepared for experiences beyond the school and go on to dual registration with mainstream providers, college placements and other opportunities to build on the success achieved within the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Central to the school's ethos is a focus on success for individual students. Individualised learning experiences are provided to meet their needs and ensure appropriate challenges. The team approach across all aspects of the school means that the care, guidance and support of students and teaching come together to ensure a personalised and ever-adapting curriculum to balance the learning, physical, emotional and health needs of students and so optimise their progress.

The care of students in the school is exceptional. The team of staff work diligently to ensure that the care and support of students is a key priority. The high level of continuous training and collaboration between the staff ensures students enjoy dignity and independence within their individual limits. Effective communication within the school supports the well-being of students and encourages progress regardless of challenges faced by individuals.

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Portesbery School has a high profile in the local and wider community to ensure students are catered for beyond the classroom and beyond school age. The high quality of inclusion within the school provides many benefits in terms of students' progress, but also staff development in Portesbery and further afield across the community. The

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partnerships that have been developed to ensure the success of inclusion have been carefully established but the momentum of this strategy is still gaining ground and the impact, although already outstanding, is still increasing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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 is a highly effective leader. He has a clear vision for the school and has, along with the school team, developed a highly effective and passionate group of staff that are able to operate independently and are analytical in their practice. This ensures the school is a highly effective learning organisation that questions practice and strives for improvement, with students central to all activities.

The school has a clear understanding of strengths and the areas that it wants to improve still further. The improvements in provision for students over 16 are a clear example of how the school identifies areas for development and then makes rapid progress in moving things forward. Staff are proud to be a part of the work of Portesbery School and work hard to ensure a wider understanding of special needs in the wider community, challenging attitudes and promoting community cohesion very well. Students also raise money for good causes and sponsor a school in Kenya. Despite difficulties with the school building, which does limit the access some students have to learning opportunities, teachers' determination and willingness to go beyond the call of duty mean that students' experiences in the school remain outstanding.

Governors contribute a great deal to the school and are very active in both challenging and supporting it. Safeguarding procedures are good. Communications with parents are very positive and the school promotes equality of opportunity very well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage features an individualised curriculum and highly effective teaching that secure outstanding progress for individuals. The setting is an integral part of the school and outcomes, provision and leadership reflect the outstanding practice seen consistently across the school. Parents and carers are involved from an early stage in transition into the school and key workers know the children very well, making the progression into Key Stage 1 seamless. Clear systems and procedures appropriate for early years are in place. The high level of staff skills and understanding of special needs in the school ensures that children's needs are quickly identified, monitored and extensively met. Learning experiences are well planned as assessments during lessons are accurate and precise. This informs the drive to improve provision as children move on.

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

The sixth form element of the school, known in the school as 'FE', has seen clear development of provision and the outcomes for students have improved a great deal. This reflects the school's sustained drive for excellence. Students in the sixth form are able to demonstrate a high degree of independence. A great deal of effort is made to ensure that students have appropriate destinations beyond school life. The leadership of FE in the school was reorganised in September 2009. The new structure is at an early stage but has already had a significant impact, and outcomes for students are now at least good, with much that is already outstanding. The provision follows a similar ethos to the rest of the school and highly tailored experiences succeed in engaging students in

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their learning.

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	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate the hard work, dedication and professionalism of school staff. They commented on the high quality of the leaders, including the headteacher and deputy head, teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff and agencies that contribute to the work of the school. They are concerned about the provision of speech and language therapies, and this concern is shared by the school. However, it has put appropriate short-term strategies in place and inspectors judged that the school is making every effort to secure the long-term provision of this vital service.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Portesbery 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	87	7	12	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	83	10	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	70	15	25	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	47	28	47	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	68	18	30	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	60	23	38	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	60	24	40	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)	23	38	28	47	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	68	14	23	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	65	19	32	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	58	23	38	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	67	14	23	2	3	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	73	13	22	3	5	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.



17 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Portesbery School, Camberley GU15 3SZ

I would like to thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave to me and Elizabeth when we inspected your school.

I enjoyed my time in your school and can see why you enjoy coming to school as it offers so much. We think your school is outstanding.

The school cares a great deal about you all. Your teachers, teaching assistants and all of the other adults in your school work exceptionally well together. They make sure that your lessons are interesting, challenging and fun. This is not an easy task but they make it look easy. They are a brilliant team and are highly skilled.

You also contribute to the school in many ways. It was fantastic to see how some of you are becoming more independent, taking the register to the office or going to the shops for food. I also enjoyed how you shared some of your experiences in assemblies.

Your school is always trying to make things even better and this reflects the passion they work with. They are going to make teaching even better by refining further the challenges in lessons and also how your outstanding progress is recorded and defined.

It was a real privilege to see the school working and I wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

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