

West Gate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131099
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	341091
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

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	4–19
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	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Charles Huddleston
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Standley
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Seventeen lessons were observed with 15 teachers seen. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body, staff, including middle managers and the lead teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and post-16 areas. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, minutes from governing body meetings and other documentation and analysed 67 parental questionnaires as well as staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- the accuracy of the school's monitoring of pupil progress in all areas of the school and how judgements of progress are made as a result
- how the school's management ensures that expectations are consistent across all areas of the school and that standards are raised as a result of any interventions put in place
- whether the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, across all key stages, so that they are ready to transfer to the next stage of their lives, especially with regard to their special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how well the school's care, guidance and support contribute to improved outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

West Gate School caters for pupils aged between 4 and 19 who have moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and disabilities as their primary special educational need and/or disability. However, a large number of pupils have additional and/or complex needs and medical needs. There is a specialist provision for primary-aged pupils with severe autism and a provision for secondary age pupils with autism has recently been established. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with about a third of pupils from minority ethnic groups. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. An Early Years Foundation Stage was established at the start of the school year and there are currently two children in the second year of this stage. The school has Specialist Special School status in cognition and learning for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16.

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

1

Main findings

West Gate School is a good school which has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is outstanding in many areas of its work, including outcomes, care, guidance and support and most areas of leadership and management. The school's philosophy which has been developed around its specialism is based on a person-centred ethos, which respects the individual and what they bring to the school. Leaders have an accurate understanding and knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement. There is a common sense of purpose throughout the staff that the school can improve further. The senior leadership team provides impressive drive, passion and vision which permeate through to all members of the school community.

Pupils excel in all areas of personal development, including behaviour, despite several pupils joining the school with a previous history of challenging behaviour and school-phobia. All staff agree that behaviour is handled well in the school, with nearly two thirds of staff who responded to the questionnaire strongly agreeing that behaviour is consistently well managed. Nearly all parents agree that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. Attendance is average. However, absences are often due to the complex and severe medical conditions of the pupils. The success of the personal outcomes is the result of consistently outstanding and well-planned care, guidance and support.

Staff work effectively in learning teams and are encouraged to contribute their ideas to the school improvement process. Responses to questionnaires were unanimous in showing that staff feel their contribution is valued. Pupils' views are taken seriously, through the two student councils, and they play a valuable part in making the school the success that it is. The person centred ethos of the school also encourages pupils to contribute to improvements within the school.

All groups of pupils, including those in the autism provisions, make good progress, with some making outstanding progress. This agrees with the quality of teaching seen during the inspection and with the school's records of its evaluation of teaching. Some of the teaching in the school is satisfactory and some is outstanding, but the majority is good, allowing pupils to make good progress overall. Staff know pupils well and match work to suit their needs, levels and abilities in the class, although the planning does not consistently show how the work is matched and evaluated afterwards. The school's own monitoring systems have recently been reviewed and new systems are being developed to more robustly identify trends in the progress of individuals and groups of pupils by key stages, subjects and special educational need. The school is starting to moderate its judgements against national benchmarks and sets challenging targets which are regularly reviewed with the pupils. The recently introduced 'person centred reviews' are

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impressive examples of pupils being involved in contributing to decisions about their future in a way which reflects their understanding and abilities. A large majority of pupils say that they feel safe, and all parents and carers agree with this view. These views are supported by the inspection judgement that all aspects of safeguarding are outstanding. The recent establishment of the Early Years Foundation Stage allows pupils to make a good start to school, although it is too early to yet see the impact on outcomes in this stage of learning. The outstanding work of the sixth form ensures that the highest expectations and aspirations are promoted as the students prepare to move to the next stages of their lives.

Pupils enjoy school, and are highly appreciative of the care they receive. A variety of visits and visitors, extended learning opportunities at lunch time and residential visits support the good curriculum very well in providing additional, high quality personal and learning experiences for pupils. The accurate view that leaders have of the school and the impressive improvements evident since the previous inspection, demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to make sustained improvement. The governing body has recently undergone some significant changes in personnel and as a result is establishing new systems to monitor the work of the school more closely. Although it is early, there is a clear understanding of its role, and it provides good support and challenge at all levels of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To move the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - identifying and sharing the best practice available in the school
 - ensuring that planning more consistently shows a precise match between the range of activities in the lesson and the different learning needs of individual pupils
 - the recording and feeding back to teachers of explicit evaluation of the effectiveness of their lessons and ongoing assessment of the work undertaken in the lesson by all pupils.
- Develop the work of the governing body so that it is better able to evaluate the performance of the school by:
 - ensuring that governors are able to effectively support and challenge the headteacher
 - scrutinising the progress towards the objectives in the school development plan.
 - developing systems so that all areas of the school's work are monitored by a named governor or committee of the governing body.
- Raise levels of attendance by working closely with parents to reduce the number of pre-arranged absences.

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Due to the severity and complexity of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, it is inappropriate to judge pupils' attainment. During their time in school, pupils achieve well, making good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. The progress pupils make in lessons is good overall as a result of activities which are well suited and matched to their needs and abilities. The monitoring of groups shows that there is no significant difference in the progress of any groups in relation to their starting points and abilities. The progress of pupils in the autism provisions is good due to the modified curriculum and strong promotion of social and communication skills. Since the previous inspection, pupils are now given more opportunities to gain external qualifications by the development of the impressive sixth form. The school is extending its range of qualifications further to meet the needs of different groups as they work their way through school.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. They say that bullying is not a concern and the evidence of the outstanding behaviour of the pupils supports this view. Any potential for challenging behaviour is defused very efficiently and quickly and as a result, there is no disruption to pupils' learning. Pupils are increasingly able to manage their own behaviour where appropriate. Systems for keeping pupils safe and supporting them in adopting healthy lifestyles are outstanding and pupils benefit from a wide range of activities and support from the school and external agencies.

Pupils' work in the community is outstanding. As well as being involved in making decisions about their own futures and helping to improve the school, they are involved in a range of events such as a recent project in partnership with the Curve Theatre and in the immediate community about how to improve the local park. Plans are now being finalised for a joint residential trip to an outdoor activity centre with another special school in the north of England. Pupils have been involved in several mini-enterprise opportunities to raise money for a range of charities, often suggested by them. The fund raising has contributed to a significantly enhanced awareness of the wider world and other cultures. The school works actively to provide opportunities for pupils to meet people from other backgrounds and this has helped to promote an awareness of cultural issues. During their time in school, pupils have an increasing knowledge of right and wrong and are given good opportunities to develop their identities and reflect on their part in the community.

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	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
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Overall, the teaching seen during the inspection was good, although a significant amount seen was outstanding, which agrees with the school's judgement of good teaching over time. In the lessons seen, support was well targeted allowing it to guide learning very effectively. Planning is variable and does not always make explicit links between prior learning, pupils' attainment levels and relevant activities to enable all pupils to make better progress. However, the knowledge which staff have of the individual learning styles of their specific pupils, and the respect which they show them, contribute well to the overall learning.

In all key stages, the curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It has improved since the previous inspection and now provides more opportunities for inclusion in local mainstream schools. Secondary pupils have good opportunities to participate in a variety of mainstream lessons if appropriate, with some aiming to take GCSEs at the end of Year 11. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has developed through the use of schemes such as EQUALS (Entitlement and Quality Education for Pupils with Learning Difficulties) and ASDAN (Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network).

Pupils know their targets and are aware of how they can improve their work. The outstanding care, guidance and support are a significant strength of the school as pupils are made aware of future pathways when they leave school, through the pupil centred curriculum and associated pupil centred reviews which involve them in the decisions being made about their future. There is an impressive range of partnerships with external agencies, the local community and the Connexions service which ensure that pupils are given access to a wide range of information, advice and guidance about their

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future options. Pupils in both departments are very clear that they feel well supported and guided in improving their work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

Leadership and management are strengths of the school. This has led to the whole school community developing a strong sense of purpose and high expectations of all. Ambitious targets are set in all areas. The outstanding senior leadership team has developed a passionate vision and an expectation that the school's person-centred ethos will lead to high expectations for all pupils. The staff and leadership share a common vision and awareness of the work needed to ensure that standards are at as high a level as possible. All members of the school are encouraged to contribute to plans for the school's development through the learning teams. Senior leaders and other staff have a very good understanding of the strengths within the school and have clear plans for further improvement which build on the current strengths of the school.

The work of two school councils demonstrate that the school's inclusive ethos promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination very effectively. Equality of opportunity is the starting point and focus of everything that the school does. The school's work on community cohesion is good. The school's knowledge of its own context and its plans to improve this area are exemplary, but the school is aware it should evaluate the impact of this area on the work of the school. Safeguarding procedures and policies, including child protection are outstanding in all aspects and show that all adults working with pupils are carefully recruited and thoroughly vetted. The work of the governing body is currently good, although several members have recently joined and new systems are being established.

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	2

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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	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The recent establishment of the Early Years Foundation Stage means that the school has not yet been able to monitor outcomes over time. However, observations and the scrutiny of documents show that the quality of the provision and teaching in this stage are good. This, alongside the planned opportunities for learning, which adheres well to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and excellent care, results in at least good progress in all areas of learning being made in the short time that children have been in this department.

The good quality of the planning and assessment meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely well led and managed, reflecting the leadership and management in the school, and the lead teacher has a good understanding of children of this age who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result of the leadership and management of the stage, welfare requirements are met and all aspects of safeguarding are outstanding, reflecting the excellent practice throughout the school.

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	1

Sixth form

The sixth form in West Gate is outstanding in all aspects. The curriculum is very well planned and the range of external accreditation gained by students has increased year on year for the last three years. The experiences and variety on offer through a range of AQA Unit Awards provide realistic and useful qualifications and opportunities to enhance

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students' prospects of positive progression routes which meet their needs when they leave school.

All lessons seen in the sixth form during the inspection were of a very high standard and matched the needs, abilities and interests of the students very well, ensuring that the progress made was at least good, and often outstanding. Support in lessons is extremely well planned and executed by staff who know the students well and can modify activities to improve access to learning. Students are offered a range of work experience placements, including within the school, if an external placement is not appropriate. This helps all students to gain a good understanding of the skills required for the world of work. The school plans extremely well for transition. There is good quality information, advice and guidance and very effective links with local colleges, so that the students moving on to the next stage of full-time education are well prepared.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Sixty-seven parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and the large majority of responses were positive. The responses and comments generally reflected the inspector's findings. However, a few parents expressed concerns that their children weren't making enough progress and that they were not well enough informed about the progress of their children. The inspectors looked closely at these areas and were satisfied that progress was at least good and that there are robust systems in place, through school diaries and person-centred reviews amongst others, to keep parents well informed. The school is aware of these concerns and will work to ensure that all parents have their concerns considered. A view from a parent, which summarises the majority of opinions in the questionnaire, said: "I am full of praise for all staff from admin to teaching and the school is lead by a fantastic leader". A telephone conversation held with another parent, at their request, also confirmed the positive views held by the large majority of parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Gate 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 147 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	65	20	30	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	66	22	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	58	20	30	8	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	48	24	38	8	13	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	61	23	38	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	47	24	36	9	14	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	54	26	41	3	5	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	49	25	41	4	7	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	54	25	40	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	59	24	39	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	52	29	43	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	54	27	43	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	58	24	38	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.



21 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Gate School, Leicester, LE3 6DG

I am writing to you on behalf of the two inspectors who visited your school recently to say thank you very much for making our visit so interesting and enjoyable.

We found your school to be good overall with several areas which are outstanding.

The headteacher, staff and governors all work very hard to make your time in school very happy and successful. You enjoy school and you make good and sometimes outstanding progress while you are there. Your parents and carers are extremely happy with how well the school educates and looks after you all. Your personal development is a very positive strength of the school and we were particularly impressed by our meetings with the primary and secondary school councils and seeing how well you work together. You work very hard to improve your personal skills and you clearly enjoy your lessons. We were particularly impressed by your behaviour and how those of you who have had some difficulty controlling yourselves in the past are able to manage it on your own and sometimes with a little bit of help. You have good attitudes to learning and you should all be very proud of yourselves. I know that the staff and your parents and carers are all proud of you.

I have asked the school to make the following improvements so that even more of its work can be outstanding:

- improve the overall quality of teaching, so that more of the good lessons become outstanding
- improve attendance
- make the work of the governing body more effective in challenging and supporting the school.

You can all help with this, by using the school councils to tell the teachers what would make your school even better than it is already.

Yours sincerely

David Muir

Her Majesty's Inspector

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