

The Wyvern School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131748
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	341212
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2009
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Miller
Headteacher	David Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	5 January 2007
School address	Great Chart Bypass Ashford TN23 4ER
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders of the school, other staff and a group of older pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation about policies and procedures, including 81 parents' questionnaires.

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

- the progress and achievement of all learners over the last 3 years, including the key skills of communication, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the quality of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- the quality of teaching throughout the school
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in driving improvement
- the impact of the school's outreach work.

Information about the school

Wyvern School provides for pupils and young adults with profound, severe and complex learning needs. Over the last five years, there has been an increase in the number of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and additional difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Most young adults in the sixth form have either moderate or severe learning difficulties. The school operates on two sites a short distance from each other. The Brookfield site is for Early Years Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1 and 2. All others attend the Buxford site, pupils in Years 3 to 6 having been relocated there at the start of the school year. The ongoing special school review by the local authority may result in further changes and redevelopment of primary accommodation, and of the school's role within the local community. The school's pre-school and Early Years Foundation Stage centre offers short-term observation and assessment facilities together with split mainstream and nursery placement. This is supported by the school's extended outreach service to mainstream schools in Ashford. Although most start the school in the Nursery or Reception class, a number of pupils join the school in Year 7. The great majority stay on into the sixth form.

Currently, a very large majority of pupils and young adults are from White British backgrounds, while a few are from other ethnic groups. There are almost twice as many boys as girls on roll. All have a statement of special educational needs, almost two fifths for severe learning difficulties and a third for ASD. There are six pupils for whom English is not their first language and who are at an early stage of English-language acquisition. Eight are looked after by their respective local authorities.

Since the last inspection, the school has gained the Healthy Schools Status and Sportsmark award.

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

Wyvern is a good school. There are some outstanding features, notably in the very high standards of care and support for all learners and in aspects of their personal development. A further significant strength is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school meets its aim of providing an ethos and environment in which children and young adults enjoy opportunities for learning and growing, feel safe and secure, and experience success and achievement. Standards remain well below those expected in mainstream schools because of learning difficulties experienced by those who attend. Notwithstanding this, many do well in their studies and, overall, progress is good for all special needs groups. In the sixth form, young adults are making good progress in their independent learning skills and personal and social development. Younger children, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make excellent progress, particularly in their communication skills, which ensures their readiness for learning. The quality of teaching is good. This results in enjoyable learning, where children and young adults respond by trying their best. The tracking of progress over time is effective, which enables areas for improvement in learning to be identified. However, there are occasions when the work is not planned effectively to meet fully the increasing range of specific learning needs of all pupils in lessons. Although there are plenty of resources for ICT, the use of these by teachers to support and enliven learning is inconsistent. Teaching is particularly effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are motivated, encouraged to practise skills and make choices, which helps them make sense of the world around them. Teaching in the sixth form is lively and engaging, being underpinned by excellent working relationships. Progress is tracked carefully and young adults are involved in peer and self-assessment when appropriate. The good curriculum tailors activities effectively to children's and young adults' needs and interests. These include a broad range of enrichment activities, including many sporting opportunities, which have resulted in the school gaining Sportsmark status. One pupil commented, 'We have a trophy cabinet in school because we win a lot, especially in sport.' Sensory activities are provided for children and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, including the use of specific rooms and a sensory garden area. In the sixth form, young adults who are not able to have work experience placements outside the school are part of a mini-enterprise project that enables them to learn about the world of work in a realistic manner. This prepares them for life beyond the school in either supported living or further education and training opportunities. Wyvern is a school where every child really does matter. All thrive within its caring ethos and make excellent progress in aspects of their personal and social development. This underpins their positive attitudes to learning and supports the good progress they make,

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including good attendance of all but a few. Safeguarding procedures have a particularly high profile in the school. Governors and all staff have a clear understanding of the issues involved and receive regular training, including regular updates on child protection. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding procedures fully met national guidelines.

The headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team, has been successful in continuing the drive for improvement. In addition, the school has maintained good improvement in its performance since the last inspection. The school evaluates its work well, the outcomes of which are used effectively to inform its strategic improvement planning. The governing body is highly effective in its role as a critical and supportive friend of the school. Because of the school's track record of enabling children and young adults to make good progress, its accurate self-evaluation and the determination to provide the best possible provision for all learners, there is good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure lesson planning meets the learning needs of the increasing range of different special needs groups within the primary and secondary sections.
- Develop teachers' competence and confidence in using ICT resources across the school to provide more consistent and effective support for pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The majority of pupils and young adults make good progress because they develop the confidence and motivation to want to become good learners. As a result, Wyvern is a happy school, behaviour is excellent and attitudes to learning are really positive. In lessons, pupils respond well to challenging questions, supported, where appropriate, by aids such as symbols, signing or switches. Although attainment throughout the school remains very low because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, good progress is made in lessons. The school's extensive and effective use of data to track and monitor progress in relation to national strategies confirms this. Good progress in developing communication skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 underpins the progress made towards the early learning goals. In Years 3 to 6, good progress is made in relation to individual targets in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In Years 7 to 11, progress continues to be good.

In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, all pupils improved their understanding of 'number bonds', because of careful planning and a variety of activities matched to individual learning needs. By the end of Year 11, most pupils are enabled to achieve success in appropriate external qualifications and, in 2009, approximately 60% of pupils gained one or more A* to G grade passes at GCSE. In the sixth form all young adults make good progress in improving their independent living skills, which considerably improves their self-esteem and prepares them well for life beyond the school. There is no evidence of any significant underachievement by any individuals or different groups of

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pupils or young adults.

Pupils and young adults report that they are safe at all times, one commenting: 'We enjoy it a lot at this school.' They stressed the fact that there was no bullying or unpleasantness in the school. The Healthy Schools Status is indicative of the school's commitment to enabling pupils and young adults to understand and adopt healthy lifestyles. This is underpinned further by personal, social and health education lessons, tutor times and, where appropriate, therapy time. Pupils and young adults appreciate being involved in the school council and 'chatterbox' groups in the younger years. A member of the school council commented: 'When we have meetings the teachers listen to us and don't say our ideas are stupid.' Pupils also develop an understanding of the needs of others by actively supporting the school's approved list of charities. There are opportunities to visit the local community and some of the young adults are able to take part in work experience placements within the community. Pupils learn basic skills, learn to handle and use money, and are encouraged to work in teams, solve problems and help in organising a range of activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2

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

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

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well planned and there is high-quality support from teachers and learning support assistants. This has a good impact on pupils' achievement. All adults in the classroom work together highly effectively, and manage the classes well. Any incidents of untoward behaviour, usually the result of frustration rather than malice, are dealt with calmly and effectively, thus ensuring the learning of others is not disrupted. Staff know their pupils very well, which, in the best lessons, enables them to plan interesting and varied activities for all pupils in the group. Teachers' use of praise and encouragement is highly effective because it is not over-effusive. Pupils respond well to this and try even harder.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' and young adults' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is appropriately modified across the school to ensure there is a focus on the key skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as to include the other National Curriculum subjects. Specialist accommodation and resources, particularly in the secondary school, enhance the delivery of these programmes of study. ICT resources, including interactive computer hardware and software, and switch technology, support the improvement of pupils' communications skills well.

The school provides a highly effective caring and supportive environment for pupils and young adults. This is underpinned by an appropriate range of policies and procedures that are well understood by staff and implemented consistently. It is particularly effective in how it supports each individual, including the most vulnerable, in very specific ways. There are well-established procedures and induction arrangements for pupils starting at the school and well-organised transition arrangements for those planning to stay on into the sixth form. Similarly, good advice, guidance and preparation are given to support young adults moving on to life beyond the school. Procedures for maintaining good attendance and reducing absence work well. Unauthorised absence is very low and authorised absence is mainly as a result of pupils' medical needs.

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?

The school's efforts to continue to drive up standards of teaching and pupils'

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achievements are informed by the annual progress meetings. Here the overall results for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are analysed, including by different pupil groups, across the key stages in the school. This then enables the senior leadership team to identify strengths and areas of concern, which informs future strategies for improvement. This ensures that all have equality of opportunity and achieve well. Teaching and learning are also monitored and evaluated regularly and, when appropriate, support programmes are put into place. Management of safeguarding procedures, including child protection and health and safety, is highly effective, which reflects the school's high priority given to this aspect of its work. The governing body continues to work hard in challenging and supporting the school in its drive for improvement and the developments in relation to the local authority's ongoing review of special school provision. There is regular feedback between the school and governors, hence keeping all fully informed.

Partnerships with other schools are particularly strong. The school's outreach provision based in the Early Years Foundation Stage centre is highly effective in supporting children in mainstream settings and in providing part-time short-term assessment placements at Wyvern. All those children supported in their home schools during the last school year have been enabled to remain there. The school works closely with parents and carers, ensuring they are fully involved in their child's education and kept informed of the progress they make throughout their time at the school. The school promotes community cohesion effectively within its own community and beyond, including a range of good opportunities for pupils and young adults to experience contact with others beyond the school.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in this stage are outstanding. The school has adapted the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance particularly well to meet the complex needs of the children. In-depth initial assessments inform the individual programmes created for each child. A major priority is enabling children to develop their communication skills so they are ready to learn. Lessons provide a highly effective focus on promoting independence, learning to express likes and dislikes, making choices and taking turns. All staff collaborate exceptionally successfully to provide a stimulating learning environment. Resources are exciting and motivate the children well in responding to external stimuli. In a music lesson, for example, the use of a Tibetan bell developed the children's sense of awe and wonder. Leadership and management are outstanding in ensuring high-quality education. Close collaboration with parents starts before their child attends the school and continues throughout. This helps ensure that similar learning routines are followed at home as well as at school.

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

Young adults make good progress, as a result of the introduction of the new curriculum this year. This focuses on personal and social development, as well as independent learning skills. In a food technology lesson, young adults were learning how to prepare healthy snacks, including how to chop and prepare a variety of fruits safely. Good teaching also enables young adults to continue to make progress in literacy and numeracy and to develop their competencies in the use of ICT to present their work and carry out independent research activities. Teachers record their progress carefully against very clear objectives, which are closely linked to the schemes of work that will lead eventually to accreditation. Dedicated accommodation, including a common room, enhances young adults' personal development and independence further. Although it is too early to judge the impact of the recent changes in provision, leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

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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	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaire are positive about the school and are happy with the quality of education it provides. This inspection confirms their views. In particular, they feel their child enjoys school and are appreciative of the fact that the school keeps their child safe. One, echoing the views of most parents, stated that: 'Their approach to learning and behaviour has been invaluable. The teachers are completely dedicated to the well-being of the children.' A few, however, have individual concerns about the appropriateness of the school for their child's particular needs, the progress their child makes in their learning and the help they get to support their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Wyvern School (Buxford) 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 received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	65	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	72	22	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	53	33	41	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	46	34	42	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	48	59	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	44	38	47	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	43	37	46	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	47	34	42	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	56	27	33	6	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	47	35	43	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	43	39	48	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	41	51	33	41	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	59	29	36	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 November 2009

Dear Pupils and Young Adults

Inspection of The Wyvern School (Buxford), Ashford, TN23 4ER

Not so long ago, my colleagues and I came to the school for two days to see how well you are getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make things better. We were impressed by your friendly welcome and we enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school. One of my colleagues also met with a small group of you to ask your opinions of the education you receive. Some of you also completed a questionnaire for us. You made it clear to us that you enjoy school very much. Lots of smiling faces on arrival in the morning and your positive attitudes support this view. We have decided that you go to a good school, where some things are really excellent. Here is a list of some of the things that are good about your school.

- You behave really well, work hard and enjoy your lessons.
- You make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your personal development.
- There are many interesting activities which help you become independent, make choices, work together and help you learn about different people.
- All the adults make sure you are safe and well cared for.
- In lessons, teachers and other adults give you all the help and support they can.
- Your headteacher runs the school well and has plans to make things better for you.

I think the school could improve more in two ways if:

- all your teachers plan activities that all groups of you can do
- all your teachers make more use of ICT to help you learn.

Best wishes to you all and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden

Lead Inspector

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