

# Newfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132051
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	341278
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alastair Younger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	134
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	47
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Joan Bamber
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Geoff Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Oldbank Lane Blackburn Lancashire BB1 2PW
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and had discussions with governors (including the chair and a parent/carer governor), staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at much of the school's documentation, including that relating to the safeguarding of students. Seventy four parental questionnaires were scrutinised alongside 37 from students and 79 from staff.

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

- the impact of changes in leadership and management and the rationale behind the changes
- whether the highest attaining students are sufficiently challenged and their achievement fully recognised through the current choice of accreditation
- how effectively teachers use computers and other technological aids to promote learning
- how the school plans and evaluates its contribution to community cohesion.

## Information about the school

All students have a statement of special educational needs. Most of these recognise severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many of these students have a significant degree of sensory impairment and physical disability. The other main group is that of students with autistic spectrum disorders. A few older students have moderate learning difficulties. Many of these are 'legacy' students from the days before the reorganisation of special schools by the local authority. The student population reflects the varied socio-economic background of the whole of Blackburn with Darwen. Almost a half of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and over a quarter are entitled to free school meals. At the time of the inspection, the school was undergoing considerable building work, partly as a result of flaws in the original building and partly as a result of internal reorganisation.

Among the awards the school has achieved are Sportsmark 2008, Activemark 2008, Inclusion Quality Mark 2009, Investors in People 2009 and Healthy Schools 2009.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Some things about it are good. These include the curriculum, the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the care, guidance and support provided. The headteacher has had to make much needed but, occasionally, unpopular changes in reorganising the workforce. The vision for change is good and is based firmly on meeting the needs of students. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. However, at times, the quest for change is running ahead of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of some new initiatives, including the school's work to promote community cohesion. Not all of the mooted changes are welcomed by a minority of staff. This is impacting negatively on the school's capacity for sustained improvement, making it no more than satisfactory.

The school excels in forming productive partnerships with parents and carers. Virtually all feel they are fully informed about their children's progress and that the school takes good account of their suggestions and concerns. Many initiatives have been implemented to help parents and carers take an ever increasing role in their children's education and development. Great care is taken to ensure that all parents and carers receive information in a form and language that they understand. Students report that they feel safe, enjoy school and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job. Nearly all staff say they are proud to work in the school and most say that their contribution is valued.

The students are delightful. They behave well and try their hardest in lessons.

Teaching is satisfactory but very variable, particularly in the way that support staff are deployed and higher attaining students are challenged. There are occasions when opportunities to promote more independence are missed, for instance when students are given more support than they need, both in terms of learning and mobility. Nevertheless, students make satisfactory progress overall as they move up through the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better by ensuring that:
  - support staff are fully engaged in the whole range of duties that can be expected of them
  - higher attaining students are presented with tasks that fully challenge them
  - staff take care to let students know when they demonstrate progress towards their personal targets.

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- Ensure that every opportunity is taken to promote more independence in learning and personal development by:
  - identifying every opportunity for students to be released from the confines of wheelchairs
  - offering additional adult support only when it is clearly needed
  - promoting and celebrating small areas of responsibility accorded to students.
- Ensure that the impact of new initiatives to promote community cohesion is fully monitored and evaluated.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The nature of their special educational needs and/or disabilities means that most students join the school at the very earliest stages of learning and development. Achievement is satisfactory. During the inspection, students were making adequate progress because of satisfactory teaching. In many lessons the teaching was good, resulting in students' good progress, but the proportion of good teaching is not high enough to ensure that progress for all over time is better than satisfactory. Students usually arrive at lessons eager to learn. They cooperate with adults and often try hard to communicate and take part in activities. On some occasions, students are not expected to work as hard as they could and learning slows in consequence. By the time they leave, usually at age 19, the most able students gain satisfactory results in nationally accredited courses. Taking into account the huge range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students. This is also true for boys and girls and students from different minority ethnic groups. The one exception is in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children achieve well because of consistently good teaching.

In every lesson observed during the inspection, behaviour was good. This also extended to playtimes and less formal parts of the school day, including lunchtimes. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Students often show great sensitivity and consideration for one another. Attendance is satisfactory; most students attend whenever they can and unauthorised absence is very low. Absences for medical reasons and extended family visits to countries of origin account for the vast majority of non-attendance. Students feel that their contributions to making the school a better place are recognised and appreciated. They contribute to termly newsletters and have been involved in the development of a wider range of lunchtime activities. The nature of their disabilities means that many students have only limited control over their lifestyles but whenever they can, they tend towards making healthy choices in what they eat and drink. Their positive attitudes support students as they and their parents work with the school to plan ahead and prepare for leaving.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is variable in quality. Just over a half of that seen during the inspection was good and the rest of it satisfactory. Good relationships between staff and students are clearly evident in most lessons. These contribute well to students' good behaviour and their enjoyment of school. The better teaching is usually characterised by higher expectations for each individual. These are facilitated by lesson planning which clearly identifies individual targets based on the analysis of prior learning and accurate assessment. There are occasions, even in some good lessons, where staff miss opportunities to reinforce students' understanding of what they are achieving. On one occasion, for instance, individual targets were rehearsed at the start of the lesson but when one student clearly achieved his, it went without comment. Not enough teaching is infused with the energy and enthusiasm seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage,

<sup>1</sup> 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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where teaching is strongest. Support staff contribute well to the physical care and support of students but less well towards the educational guidance given to them. Teachers are increasingly making good use of computer technology to help promote progress and learning. Most use interactive whiteboards well and many promote the use of switches and other augmentative aids to promote communication. In classrooms for students with autism, skilled use is made of visual prompts to help students communicate. Weaker teaching is evident when teachers play too dominant a role in lessons and do not fully involve all students. This was particularly noticeable in a minority of sixth form lessons where the most able students were under-challenged. The curriculum provides students with a broad range of experiences which add to their enjoyment of school. Opportunities to promote students' personal development and well-being are the common thread which runs through the whole curriculum. Occasionally, the balance between personal development and academic learning leans too far towards the former but this is more of a teaching issue because the planned curriculum is well balanced and relevant. Good adaptations have been made to the curriculum to meet the needs of students with autism. Enrichment opportunities are good; they are varied, well planned and much enjoyed by students. A recent success has been an ongoing project where sixth formers have visited the science museum in Manchester as a part of an accredited course 'Selecting and Using a Community Facility'. Nearly all parents feel the care of these vulnerable students is of the highest quality. Many students are reliant on adults to protect their physical well-being and look after their hygiene requirements. This care is skilled, sensitive and discreet. It helps them to remain comfortable and contributes to their ability to access all that the curriculum offers. Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote more independent exercise and mobility, including releasing pupils from the confines of wheelchairs. This situation is compounded by the dearth of indoor and outdoor recreational and sporting facilities, over which the school has no control because of significant building work taking place. Clearly targeted additional learning support is afforded to many individuals and expertly delivered, particularly effectively by the special educational needs coordinator. The school works extensively and effectively in partnership with many other professionals and agencies concerned with students' well-being. Good advice is given to older students about their options on leaving schools. This process always involves parents, carers and students in its planning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
	<p>3</p>
<p><b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team and other leaders and managers share a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to help the school improve. Many important decisions have been made, not all of them well received by a small number of staff who have proved resistant to change. In the main, the need for change has been recognised and most staff are embracing the headteacher's firm commitment to 'putting children first'. A good new system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching has been introduced this term. Opportunities for professional development are increasingly well targeted to match the school's priorities for improvement. Governors are loyal supporters of the school. At the moment, governors are clearly involved in moving the school on in terms of organisation, premises and finance but less so in finding out for themselves what actually goes on in school on a day-to-day basis. The school takes care to monitor the progress of individuals and analyses information carefully to ensure that provision for different groups of students is equitable and that all share similar opportunities to succeed. Safeguarding regulations and duties are met. Staff have received good training. Arrangements for inter-agency working are comprehensive. The school contributes successfully to the promotion of community cohesion through its work in the multicultural environs of Blackburn with Darwen. Much of its work is effective. The weakness is that its approach is more ad hoc than planned and this makes it very hard for managers to evaluate its effectiveness.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage



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Children thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most enter it at the very earliest levels of development and learning. They make good progress. They do so because of skilled, committed teaching, a good curriculum and the same high degree of care found throughout the whole school. Usually, the signs of progress are infinitesimally small but teachers are skilled in recognising them. In one lesson, for instance, a slight eye movement in response to reflected light was recognised by the teacher as a possible form of communication. Occasional shrieks of excitement and moments of animated reaction point to students enjoying their experiences, for instance when feeling soggy, slimy pasta or rattling dry pasta on a metal plate. One area of provision that does not match the high standard seen elsewhere is the opportunity for outdoor learning. One reason for this is the fact that critical medical conditions have often to be taken into account but another reason is the fact that facilities remain limited. The staff team is well managed and forms a close-knit and well-co-ordinated group.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Sixth form**

Sixth form students achieve satisfactory outcomes and most are suitably well prepared for moving on to further forms of education or training. Students follow a range of courses, all providing opportunities for external accreditation. These include 'Accreditation for Life and Living' and the 'National Skills'. These courses do not fully reflect all of the areas in which students are making progress and the range is currently being extended to include the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Bronze award, which recognise success at a higher level. There is a good emphasis on work-related learning and experience. College and community links are well developed and contribute well to securing smooth transition into future placements. Teaching is satisfactory overall. About half of that observed was good in that it stimulated students to work hard and was well matched to the wide range of ability in each class. On other occasions, higher attaining students were under-challenged and were not sufficiently encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning and thus develop a greater degree of independence. Many aspects of leadership and management are good but the unevenness of teaching across the whole of the department weakens its impact.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Each of their responses to the questionnaire reported that their children enjoy school, that the school meets their children's needs, that they are well informed about their children's progress and that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree that communication with parents and carers about their children's progress is a strength of the school and that students are very happy to attend. They feel that the school is satisfactorily led and managed rather than well managed.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Newfield 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 inspector received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 134 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	82	13	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	76	16	22	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	68	24	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	55	29	39	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	66	23	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	64	25	34	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	65	24	32	2	3	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)	36	49	35	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	66	25	34	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	50	35	47	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	58	29	39	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	59	28	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	73	18	24	2	3	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



24 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Newfield School, Blackburn, BB1 2PW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We spent a couple of days looking at everything that was going on in, and out of, the classroom and you will have seen us making lots of notes. We judge that Newfield is a satisfactory school.

We saw many of the good things that go on in school and a few things that we thought should be improved. A lot of the teaching we saw was good, but not enough of it, so we judged teaching to be satisfactory. This is why we can confidently say you are making satisfactory progress. We thought, however, that you could be making even better progress because you show a good willingness to work hard and you behave well. You told us that you are happy in school and feel safe and we agree that these feelings are well justified because you are well looked after. We felt that your senior staff were doing a satisfactory job in difficult circumstances. You must be looking forward to the day when the builders leave and all the school buildings are usable again.

We have made several suggestions as to how the school could improve faster. We want all teachers to strive to provide consistently good lessons so that you can make better progress; we want staff to encourage you to become more independent in your learning and mobility; and we want your senior staff to put together a clear plan to show how the school (that includes you) can contribute even more to help pull together all sections of the community you live in.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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