

Coppice Communtiy School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135546
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	341666
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Poppy
Headteacher	Mrs L Jarred
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents such as curriculum plans, a range of policies, safeguarding records, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed the 38 parental questionnaires that were returned.

- how well teachers use assessment information in order to meet each pupil's needs
- the extent of middle leaders' involvement in school self-evaluation and driving improvement
- the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and whether the school's judgement is accurate
- how effectively the school promotes independence skills in the sixth form.

Information about the school

The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autism or challenging behaviour. In addition to their severe learning difficulties, the large majority of pupils are autistic, most have speech and language difficulties, the majority have behavioural difficulties and a small minority have medical or other needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are White British. Six children are in the care of the local authority. There are currently 13 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school opened in September 2008 following the local authority's reorganisation of its special schools. It was at this point that the headteacher joined the school. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher had been absent for some months owing to ill-health. An assistant headteacher is currently acting deputy headteacher. The sixth form leader took up her post in September 2009. The school is on the same site as a mainstream secondary visual arts college. Pupils' transport to and from Coppice is managed by the school through a fleet of mini-buses. The school has gained two Basic Skills awards and the Healthy Schools 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Coppice has taken great strides forward since it opened, with significant developments made on all fronts. As a result, this new school already has some good features. For example, the care, guidance and support provided is effective and involves strong partnerships with a range of agencies and close working relationships with parents and carers. This helps to explain why pupils feel so safe in school and their attendance is above average. The school provides well for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and learning opportunities are matched closely to the needs of children of this age. Elsewhere in the school, the curriculum is satisfactory but is less well developed. For instance, there are not enough links made between subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2. After their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' progress is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, they gain a range of accreditation, although some courses in Key Stage 4 do not lead to awards. Lessons throughout the school often include activities that interest pupils and much learning takes place outside the classroom. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Staff do not always make full use of different methods of communication, such as the use of signs or symbols, and work is sometimes not pitched at the correct level for each pupil.

Self-evaluation is accurate. It is effective, particularly at a whole-school level, because the headteacher has established a rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation, with the information gathered feeding into carefully constructed action plans. Reviews of the outcomes of the plans for the school's first year show clearly that senior leaders are building up a track record of rapid improvement. Some leaders, such as those who coordinate subjects, are less experienced and are still developing the skills related to their roles. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of the school's capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress by increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or better. In particular, focus on ensuring that staff consistently match work closely to each pupil's needs by making full use of signs, symbols and other alternative forms of communication and information about what pupils need to learn next
- Develop the skills of subject leaders so they are involved more in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and planning for further improvement
- Improve the curriculum by making more links between subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2 and extending the scope of accreditation in Key Stage 4.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may

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receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Most pupils arrive at lessons ready and willing to work. They generally pay attention to staff, follow instructions and show interest in other pupils. Although sometimes content to allow adults to do too much for them, pupils occasionally take the initiative as they start to become more independent learners. In a science lesson, a less-able pupil in Key Stage 4 demonstrated voluntarily that he remembered how to attach a battery to a water level sensor and test the device. Pupils particularly enjoy practical work such as this and the pace of learning often picks up during lessons or particular activities when these provide opportunities for first-hand experiences. More prompting is needed when tasks are mundane and don't particularly capture pupils' interest. Pupils frequently show that they are willing to share resources, take turns, and follow routines.

All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily when their individual starting points are considered. The school's analysis of assessment information shows that rates of progress are broadly similar in English and mathematics. Pupils typically make slower progress in writing and in applying their mathematics skills, because they find these aspects of learning particularly difficult. The majority of pupils meet the suitably challenging targets set by the school and targets are occasionally exceeded. By the end of Year 11 and Year 14, all students have gained accreditation, including in English and mathematics. Their personal development is recognised through awards such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network's Transition Challenge and Towards Independence courses.

Behaviour is satisfactory, despite the potential of a volatile response inherent in many of the pupil's particular learning needs. Learning usually takes place without interruption, the number of incidents of challenging behaviour is reducing significantly, and members of the public often praise the sensible behaviour they observe when pupils are out and about. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and are keen to apply their knowledge. For example, when planning the Christmas party, school council members stated firmly that there should be 'no pies' but wanted salads and smoothies. Prefects appreciate the need to set a good example and older pupils willingly help to support younger ones. Pupils regularly raise funds for charity and contribute to decisions, for instance, about school uniform and play equipment. They appreciate each other's needs and accept differences. Pupils are becoming increasingly prepared for life beyond school as opportunities for them to be independent are made more available. For instance, sixth form students are learning to run a healthy tuck shop.

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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are usually characterised by positive working relationships between pupils and adults. As assessment has become more rigorous, staff have developed a clearer understanding of what each pupil needs to learn next and which methods of communication they should use. The extent to which teachers take this information into account when planning lessons varies and so work is sometimes too hard for particular pupils and too easy for others. Again, staff communicate with pupils in different ways, such as by exchanging pictures or using signing, but these systems are not consistently used to the full to involve every pupil in discussions or at every stage in the lesson. Staff teams generally work together well to make sure lesson time is not wasted. Occasionally, support staff are not clear enough about their role and either do too much for pupils or don't step in quickly enough to support learning.

Pupils relish their good and increasing opportunities for learning in mainstream schools or at college. Visits in the local community and further afield, including residential visits, significantly enhance learning and development. After-school and lunchtime clubs and visitors to school, such as musicians and representatives of the fire service and police, also help to enrich the curriculum well. Lessons offer pupils plenty of chances to exercise, including through the use of community facilities. In Key Stages 1 and 2, programmes of work do not link subjects together sufficiently, missing opportunities to help pupils appreciate the relevance of what they learn. A number of Key Stage 4 courses are not accredited so pupils' achievements are not fully recognised.

There are well organised and sensitive arrangements to help pupils settle in quickly when they join the school. Good attendance is encouraged strongly, taking full

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advantage of the links with families achieved through the school's bus drivers and escorts. Pupils' behaviour is tracked exhaustively enabling the school to apply rewards and target support just where and when needed. Detailed risk assessments for each pupil feed into care and behaviour plans, tailored closely to individual needs and ensuring the most vulnerable pupils get the support necessary. There are good efforts to involve parents and carers, for example, through courses in signing or cooking. Parents' meetings are attended by health professionals and agencies. Pupils know what to do if they have concerns and school nurses encourage them to take some responsibility for their own health, for instance, by checking when it is time for medication. Support at lunchtime is efficient but sometimes lacks the warm and positive approach pupils experience at other times.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

With very strong support from the other senior leaders, particularly the acting deputy headteacher, and the governors, the headteacher has spearheaded the school's drive for improvement and has worked tirelessly. Leaders have provided extensive support and training and staff have risen to the challenge of new systems and practices. Teaching and learning are monitored comprehensively but some leaders, such as subject coordinators, have yet to get fully involved in this work, slowing down the pace of improvement in these areas. Analysis of information derived from tracking pupils' progress and personal development is used to ensure that no groups are disadvantaged. For instance, Key Stage 3 classes were moved from the building used by the younger pupils, in order to provide them with a learning environment more appropriate to their ages. Efforts to promote community cohesion have so far focused primarily on including pupils in the local community. The close partnership established with the adjacent visual arts college has enabled pupils from both schools to find out about their similarities and understand their differences. Safeguarding is given high priority. During the inspection, a potential emergency was handled very efficiently, all staff responding promptly and calmly to follow correct procedures and ensure pupils were safe.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, because staff take every chance to promote these areas of learning. Frequent opportunities for children to choose from a variety of motivating activities encourage them to be independent and to express themselves. For example, children signed that they needed help when putting on Wellington boots before going out to ride bikes in the rain. When adults lead activities they are very clear what individuals are intended to learn, helping to ensure that children make good progress, for instance, in developing new vocabulary. Working relationships between children and adults are excellent and give children confidence to explore resources and tackle new experiences. Learning opportunities include a wide range of visits to other Early Years Foundation Stage settings and in the community, supporting social development and communication especially well. There are very good links with parents, who contribute to the thorough assessments of children's progress. The acting deputy headteacher and the teacher together ensure that children have as far as possible the same opportunities as those in mainstream settings. Leaders are clear about how they intend to develop provision, for example, by making access to the outside areas more freely available, and are currently writing an action plan to help them achieve their goals.

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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	2

Sixth form

Students make the progress expected from their starting points. They all go on to gain a growing range of accreditation that takes account of their abilities and which for some, involves learning at college. The new leader has completely revised the curriculum and these changes are starting to improve the way in which students are prepared for moving on. For example, students have worked together to create a garden area as the starting point for a course in horticulture. They gain experience of the world of work through placements in the community or in school. 'I worked in a shop. I did it well and enjoyed (it)', wrote one student. Students are becoming increasingly self-aware, especially as they are no longer taught alongside those in Key Stage 4, are encouraged not to wear uniform, and regularly mix with mainstream students. Staff are getting more accustomed to promoting students' independence and are starting to give them more responsibility. However, there remain missed opportunities, such as the lack of chances for students to choose how they spend their free time. The leader has carried out a searching audit of provision which is reflected in her plans for improving the sixth form. These are well in hand. For example, some students are now working towards travelling independently.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
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

The parents who returned the questionnaire are happy with the school although one or two would like to see improvements here and there. The inspectors confirm that the school keeps pupils safe but consider that their progress could be better with improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Coppice Community 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 103 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	68	12	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	66	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	55	17	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	50	17	45	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	24	63	12	32	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	50	16	42	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	45	21	55	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)	16	42	19	50	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	58	15	39	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	45	19	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	50	16	42	2	5	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	66	12	32	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	76	8	21	1	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"> ■ 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.



Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when the inspectors visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and finding out about the school. Coppice is a satisfactory new school. These are some of the things it does best:

- the children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start
- the school takes good care of you and so you feel safe
- you learn a lot about how to be fit and healthy
- you help each other, the adults in school, and people in the community
- the school works well with your parents and carers to help you learn.

We have asked the school to help you learn faster by:

- giving you work that is just hard enough
- making some changes to what you are taught.

Your headteacher and the staff are working hard to make Coppice a good school. We send them and each one of you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

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