

Landgate School, Bryn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134297
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	344711
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	49
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Winstanley
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Sharps
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited twelve lessons taught by twelve different teachers. Further time was spent looking at pupils' records of achievement, work books, and information about pupils' progress, so almost half of the inspection time was spent on learning. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and other professionals, and looked at the school's review of its work, the current plan to raise pupils' attainment, minutes of governors' meetings and documentation to ensure that pupils are safe. Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005 unless the inspectors have specific reasons for the school to do this. In this inspection, parental questionnaires were not sent out. However, the report makes reference to a recent survey of parents' views conducted by the school towards the end of last term.

- in ensuring that statutory requirements are met
- in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching
- in ensuring that staff use a common system to assess and record pupils' achievements
- in ensuring that teachers' planning builds on previous learning
- in providing pupils and students with equipment that is suitable for their age
- in providing a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all pupils.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average special school caters for pupils with autism, all of whom has associated learning difficulties. In addition, a few pupils have medical conditions or mental health needs. All pupils have a statement to meet their special educational needs. A small proportion is from ethnic minority backgrounds or in the care of the local authority.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and two assistant headteachers have taken up post. The Early Years Foundation Stage reopened at the start of the school year. The school is an ECO school and has achieved a number of national awards including the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Bronze 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

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures.

This is now a good school that provides good value for money. The school has been turned around in little more than a year because of the inspirational, visionary leadership of the headteacher and the excellent appointments of the assistant headteachers. Leaders have radically reorganised roles, redistributed responsibilities and changed the staffing structure to match individual expertise to the needs of the school. Leaders are continually building in capacity to improve all levels of management through staff training and the 'Raising Attainment Plan'. Following each monitoring visit, the plan has been tightened, speeding up school improvement. The local authority has gradually withdrawn its support, recognising this is a school that can stand on its own two feet. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a proven track record. With the renewed enthusiasm and improved skills of the staff this gives the school good capacity to continue to improve.

As a result of the vastly improved provision, from their very low starting points, pupils in all age groups are making accelerated progress in their learning and in their personal development. Pupils' learning is good because the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Teachers now plan their work thoroughly and are more accurate in their assessment of pupils' achievements. In addition, a wealth of data has been collected centrally. This is used especially well to track individual pupil's progress and to bridge gaps in learning in all aspects of literacy and numeracy. However, while accurate, the assessment of other subjects is too general. For example, pupils' progress in science is recorded as one grade, rather than a different grade for each of the four aspects of the subject. Furthermore, it is not easy to have an overview or to compare the performance of different groups of pupils. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community. They are gaining an awareness of different cultures and faiths, but such learning is ad hoc because formal planning to promote pupils' understanding of diversity and community cohesion is at an early stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the information gathered on pupils' achievements, by:
 - recording and monitoring pupils' progress in all aspects of each subject
 - drawing together the information held on groups of pupils in a more coherent way.

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- Increase pupils' awareness of diversity and community cohesion, by:
 - formalising the programme
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to experience a range of cultures.

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

As the monitoring inspections have progressed, pupils have demonstrated increased concentration and a far more positive attitude to their work. They now want to learn and are producing a good volume of neatly presented and well-organised work in their books. Pupils are no longer working in isolation and now have a feeling of belonging to a group, which is helping to improve their personal development.

Pupils' achievements are good. As a result of teachers checking their progress, pupils are making similar progress in all subjects. The gap between their performance in reading and writing is narrowing. Similarly, when the data identified weaknesses in pupils' awareness of shapes and measures, a focus week on this topic soon improved their attainment and brought it close to that in number and counting. Pupils make very good progress in communication. In addition, learning new signs and symbols with the communication workers allows pupils to have a better understanding of the specialist vocabulary required in, for example, science and geography. The achievement of higher-attaining pupils is furthered through very good links with local primary schools for humanities and with secondary schools in pupils' home communities for science.

Pupils are proud of and committed to the school community and are extending this to the local neighbourhood. Residents commented how much they enjoyed the coffee morning and bingo organised by pupils. Pupils have confidence and have gained a voice through programmes such as 'conversation groups'. Unhappy with the selection of books in the library, they have purchased a wider range and now scan their own books in and out 'like at a proper library'. Of equal importance, they are able to convey their worries or concerns. Pupils' behaviour is good. As a result of relevant behaviour plans, those with complex needs are more aware of consequences and respond well to the expectations and role models provided by adults. Attendance is above the national average with almost all absences due to illness.

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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are making accelerated progress because teaching is good. Teachers have a much improved understanding of how pupils with complex needs learn. They plan their lessons meticulously, providing work that is accurately matched to pupils' style of learning and individual needs and that takes account of prior learning. This is a huge improvement, especially for higher-attaining pupils. Considerable improvements have been made in providing for those pupils who have more extreme autism. Adults are skilled at recognising the difference between poor behaviour and autism, and deal with it accordingly. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good and lessons are peaceful, with minimum disruption to learning. Teachers now use a common system to assess pupils' achievements. Their understanding is accurate and recording is precise. Individual education plans have been radically overhauled and are meaningful to pupils and their families. Pupils have made great strides in assessing their learning and that of their classmates. Marking by adults is outstanding with pupils left in no doubt about their achievements and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is unrecognisable from that at the time of the last inspection. There are many strengths, in particular that it is sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs of all pupils. While pupils of differing ages are sometimes educated in the same group, this does not affect their progress as each pupil has their own personalised programme. The timetable has been reorganised with suitable time now allocated to each subject. Pupils say they particularly enjoy the 'special' weeks, such as the 'India' week. Good provision is made for the creative arts and sport, including after-school clubs, which contribute noticeably to pupils' skills and enjoyment.

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A substantial investment in age-appropriate resources has improved achievement. For example, pupils are making greater progress in science, being motivated by equipment, such as magnets, and aspiring to do well to become a 'professor' and wear the white 'lab coat' for the lesson. Leaders recognise there is still a way to go in developing the curriculum, for example, in humanities and in the provision of resources, but these are no longer barriers to learning.

Adults provide good care, support and guidance for all pupils, the vast majority of whom are vulnerable. Targeted training has enabled staff to provide well for pupils with medical conditions. Links with health professionals and other agencies are efficient and effective. Guidance and information for parents and carers is vastly improved, with many commenting that they now feel part of their child's education.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has very successfully changed the culture of the school in a very short time. Her enthusiasm and passion are infectious. Staff and pupils have adopted a 'can do' attitude and have the confidence to take on new responsibilities. Staff absence has been halved so that pupils now have continuity in their learning. The revamped staffing structure and changes in roles and responsibilities, particularly in the better use of teaching assistants, is making a considerable difference. Examples of this include in communication, work placements and with pupils' independent travel. The scrupulous monitoring of classroom practice, pupils' work and teachers' planning backed by a well-matched programme of training has speeded pupils' learning and their personal development.

The work undertaken by the senior leadership team and its impact on the provision has been exceptional. Training is now well advanced to bring phase and subject leaders to the same level. A commercial programme to record and analyse pupils' progress is being used effectively by leaders, subject managers and class teachers to raise attainment. This has identified gaps in learning and enabled good interventions to be put into place. Similarly, it has identified those pupils who learn more quickly thus allowing challenging tasks to be planned to further their learning.

Governors now have a greater understanding of their role and are beginning to hold the school to account. They have made some very good appointments to key posts. All legal requirements are now met. Links with partner schools, formed initially for the benefit of

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Landgate staff and pupils are now two-way, providing mutual support. At the time of the inspection, arrangements for safeguarding pupils were good. Leaders and managers work conscientiously to ensure robust measures are in place and that statutory duties are reviewed regularly and meet requirements.

Equality of opportunity for pupils, parents, carers and staff is at the heart of the school's work. Extensive work has been undertaken over the past year to ensure all pupils have equal access to all that the school provides. The school is now a unified community with everyone aiming for the same goals. It is successfully engaging with the local area, but opportunities for pupils to experience groups beyond the immediate neighbourhood to promote community cohesion are at an early stage in formal planning.

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	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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although the unit has been in operation for only six months, children have settled exceptionally well, despite their complex needs. As a result of the good provision, they are familiar with routines and are making good progress. Progress is most defined in communication and in children's personal development. However, there are no weak areas of learning. Good leadership and management have quickly brought staff together as a team and resulted in an environment that is bright, welcoming and one that encourages children to be curious and to investigate. This is particularly so in the 'quad' where, for example, children had enormous fun exploring the cold environment of penguins. The unit has been designed skilfully so that children have access to all areas independently and with the expectation that, despite their complex needs, children will make choices. Planning is good and includes suitable evaluations of children's successes.

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However, too little reference is made to the difficulties children encounter. Assessment is undertaken conscientiously with comprehensive 'learning stories' recording progress as well as providing photographic evidence of magical moments for parents. The unit is well resourced, although some of the second-hand wheeled toys are in need of replacement.

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

With the arrival of the talented leader, the sixth form has come a long way in a very short time. It has moved from inadequate provision at the last inspection to a purposeful unit where students are making good progress because of the vastly improved teaching, curriculum and resources. The increased range of awards and activities is motivating students and this is exemplified in their outstanding attendance. Newly introduced pursuits such as hair and beauty, bricklaying, and painting and decorating not only lead to nationally-recognised awards, but also prepare students well for life after school. Students are increasing their understanding of business through enterprise activities, being justifiably proud of their greetings card business and their allotment. The number of students able to travel independently using public transport has increased, as has the number of students undertaking work experience off-site. Leaders now have a clear picture of the achievements of all students, although books recording photographs of achievements are at an early stage. Students are becoming much fitter and more aware of the local community through a daily one mile walk around the village each lunchtime.

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

The results of a survey of parents' and carers' opinions by the school showed that all the

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parents who responded feel welcome at the school and able to approach staff if they have a problem. They have seen a 'massive improvement' in the quality of information available, especially the home-to-school diary. Parents and carers all say they find the annual reviews valuable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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

As you may recall, my colleagues and I have visited your school three times over the past year to see how well it is doing. It gives me great pleasure to tell you that your school is now a good school and no longer requires the extra help it has been receiving. Your headteacher has made an amazing difference over this last year. She has appointed some excellent new people. All the adults in your school are now working flat out to make it the best they can. As a result, your school has improved beyond recognition, especially in the activities you do. You are well behaved and work very hard. This means that, although your progress is in small steps, it is good.

There are a couple of areas that would help your school even better. I have asked your teachers to:

- make better use of the information they keep about your achievements
- provide you with more opportunities to experience different cultures and faiths.

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and all my colleagues during our visits. We enjoyed talking to you, eating lunch together and visiting your lessons. Thank you for taking time to give us your views of school. It was clear from our time with you that you enjoy school and think that you are safe and very well cared for.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

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