

Broadfield Specialist School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119883
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	385891
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Alastair Younger

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Not Applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Position Vacant
Headteacher	Angela Banner
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alastair Younger
Nell Banfield

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. Twelve lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with several senior staff. Informal discussions were held with more staff and with a few students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to school improvement, students' progress and their safety. A total of 36 parental and carers' questionnaires was received.

Information about the school

Students' special educational needs range from moderate to profound and multiple learning difficulties. Almost a half has autistic spectrum conditions, often in combination with their learning difficulties. About a third of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. About a quarter is from minority ethnic groups, mainly Pakistani. Boys outnumber girls by about two to one.

Since the last inspection there has been considerable reorganisation and a redesignation of the school. These changes took place in September 2011. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2009 leading up to the reorganisation. Primary-aged students transferred to another school. Many staff and students from two other schools transferred inwards. All students are now of secondary school age and a new sixth form (known to parents, carers and the school as the Further Education department) has been created. The number of students on roll has increased by about 20%. The school has specialist school status for special educational needs in cognition and learning.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It has rapidly established itself as a school that students enjoy attending and meets with the approval of virtually all parents and carers and the vast majority of staff. It is not yet outstanding because there is some teaching that is less than good and not enough that is outstanding.
- Students achieve well. Progress compares favourably with national guidance for judging it in comparison with similar schools. Most students join the school with low levels of attainment, but many leave with awards that recognise higher levels of attainment (at about Level 2 or 3 of the National Curriculum). Students make particularly good progress in learning how to communicate.
- Good leadership of teaching has rapidly resulted in the establishment of a keen and ambitious team of teachers. The large majority of teaching is good. Occasionally, teachers do not give students sufficient time to process their thoughts and prepare their answers to the teacher’s questions. Teachers develop excellent relationships with students and manage extreme behaviours associated with autism in a highly skilled manner.
- Behaviour is outstanding and students are kept very safe. Underpinning their excellent behaviour is the fact that students are always expected to do as much as they can for themselves. This fosters independence and a sense of responsibility and discourages them from becoming over-reliant on adult support.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. There is widespread sharing of responsibilities. Teachers manage large classroom teams well. Senior leaders monitor everything the school does very carefully. They quickly identify weaknesses and act promptly to remedy them. Performance management is being used well to help improve teaching. Students’ spiritual, moral social and cultural development is strongly promoted.
- The sixth form (Further Education department) is good. It has rapidly established itself and provides well for the oldest students. They are given suitable opportunities to

experience working life and to attend colleges but this programme, especially the participation in vocational activities, is not yet fully developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers, when asking questions, provide sufficient time for students to think about and prepare their responses.
- Develop a greater range of opportunities for students in the Further Education department to participate in vocational activities.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Much of the available data to show students' progress in recent years are no longer relevant because Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils have since transferred to another school and some of the current Key Stages 3, 4 and Further Education students have only recently transferred into the school.

Students always join the school with a low level of attainment, sometimes at the very earliest stages of learning and development. Those with the greatest degree of disability and special educational needs move on in tiny, almost imperceptible steps but staff are adept at noticing these changes and informing parents and carers about them. This is why parents and carers almost unanimously support the view that their children are making good progress. More-able students make good progress from their starting points to enable them to gain awards representing attainment at about Level 2 to 3 by the end of Year 11. The work students are doing in the Further Education department shows them to be making good progress in moving towards independent living and learning important skills to help them in adult life.

Inspection evidence shows that virtually all students are making good progress and achieving well because they are well taught. The few students who are not making the progress expected of them are quickly identified and often given extra support which makes good use of the skills developed through the school's specialist status. The progress made by different groups is carefully monitored and shows very little variation. In most lessons observed students were seen to be making good progress. They were attentive, outstandingly well behaved and keen to share what they knew they had learned. This outcome was seen at the end of a physical education lesson. Students responded eagerly to perceptive questioning that tested not only their physical experience but strongly promoted the use of specific vocabulary such as 'long' and 'short', 'fast' and 'slow', thus making good reference to numeracy and literacy in addition to checking gains in physical prowess. Cross-curricular links such as this are strongly promoted across the school and give added value to students' learning. Literacy skills are promoted well. All students who are able to read are listened to doing so each day. Good writing is celebrated and prominently displayed. For some students the focus remains on promoting their communication rather than literacy skills. Students make particularly good progress in this area because of staff expertise in using a wide range of strategies and skills including the use of signing, augmentative aids

and the use of pictures, symbols, signs and objects of reference to enable students to communicate.

Quality of teaching

A good programme of continuing professional development has enabled teachers to adapt quickly to the demands of teaching groups of students of which they have previously had limited experience. Leaders and managers have been assiduous in making it clear to teachers that to work effectively in this school they have to acquire the teaching skills to enable all students, irrespective of the category of need, to make the progress expected of them. Nearly all teachers display a strong commitment to doing so. Parents and carers are almost unanimous in saying that their children are well-taught. Students totally agree.

Nearly all teachers plan carefully to meet individual needs. As a result, students not only engage in, and access, tasks but complete tasks set at their respective levels and demonstrate progress. A good level of challenge is evident in nearly all lessons. This is because teachers take good notice of the respective targets set out in each student's individual education plan. In addition, teachers take care to check what students have remembered from previous lessons and whether they understand what is being taught in current ones. These features were all highly apparent in a well-taught lesson as students learned French words for different facial features. Teachers strongly promote good social and moral behaviour in classrooms. They encourage students to work together in pairs or small groups and to observe clearly-stated class rules for conduct.

Reading is taught effectively. All readers follow recognised reading schemes that they become familiar with and enjoy. English lessons often start with a simple phonics starter exercise, such as when Year 8 students identified missing letters and sounds from words displayed to them.

All teaching positively encourages communication and the promotion of independence. Those with limited powers of communication are offered expert support, often facilitated through training associated with the school's specialist status. For many students communication is mainly through the use of pictures, signs and symbols. A few use signing in which all staff are trained. Teachers take great care to take up opportunities to promote the basic skills of numeracy and literacy in as many lessons as possible, for instance, in food technology, where students weigh and measure ingredients and write about their cooking.

Some teaching is satisfactory because a small minority of teachers does too much for students. These lessons tend to be dominated by 'teacher talk' and when questions are asked, students are not given sufficient time to respond before the teacher answers the question. This is the only situation where students who are known to be able to do some things for themselves, are not given the opportunity to do so.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically exemplary. On a day-to-day basis the school presents as a haven of calm. The views of parents, carers, staff and students strongly support what inspectors saw for themselves over two days. Serious incidents are very rare. Those on record are nearly all typical of the sometimes extreme manifestations of behaviour associated with autism. Records show that they are skilfully managed and carefully recorded to help the school draw up management plans for those students most

affected. There is no evidence of racism, sexism or harassment of any type. There is no evidence of bullying and students are adamant that there is none. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Students attend whenever they can. They say they feel exceptionally safe and that they are very happy in school. Parents and carers share the same sentiment. There is regular contact between school and home to share any concerns about the well-being of students. Causes of absence are quickly established to ensure that someone is always accountable for any student not in school. In personal, social and health education lessons students are given excellent advice about the inherent risk of certain situations and how to avoid being caught up in circumstances they may not understand. There has been a good recent initiative to stress the potential dangers of unsupervised access to the Internet.

Students are not allowed to become over-dependent on adult support. If it is known they can do something for themselves, they are expected to do it. They readily help one another and take on simple responsibilities around the school. A well-developed programme helping older students to travel independently and progress through courses leading to awards clearly shows students making significant strides towards independent living when they leave school.

Leadership and management

In a relatively short period of time senior leaders and managers, ably supported by a good governing body, have laid solid foundations and there is a clear capacity for future improvement. A highly concerted and effective effort supported through good performance management and professional development has ensured that staff are rapidly broadening their skills base so as to be able to help the hugely widening range of special educational needs and disabilities they encounter amongst students. The school's expertise in promoting learning for students with autism is extensively recognised and respected by many local schools, supported through Broadfield's specialist status. The Further Education department has rapidly become a popular and successful destination for students who previously transferred to other schools at the end of Year 11. Subject leaders work effectively to create suitable pathways through which students of differing ability can share equal opportunities to achieve success. This has contributed to the development of a good curriculum and teaching which strongly promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although the Further Education curriculum provides opportunities for students to follow college courses and to participate in work-related experiences, there is a slight imbalance between these and desk-bound tasks relating to pursuing accreditation.

Self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. The school's own monitoring and evaluation of teaching bears a very close resemblance to the findings of the inspection and joint observations involving inspectors and senior leaders identified the same strengths and weaknesses in lessons. When teachers are observed they are always provided with suggestions for further development. Morale amongst staff is high and all are proud to be associated with the school. Parents and carers are unanimous in their praise of the leadership and management of the school. Care is taken over the vetting of staff to make sure that safeguarding requirements are met. Safety is further promoted by a raft of good policies and risk assessment procedures which are observed carefully by staff.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



12 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Broadfield Specialist School, Accrington, BB5 3BE

We visited your school the other day. We came to see how you were getting on. Some of you may remember us sitting at the back of your classrooms while you were being taught. Thank you for making us welcome.

We made lots of notes. Most of the time we were writing things like 'teaching is good' or 'the behaviour of students is outstanding' or 'students are working hard and making good progress'. Those are three reasons why your school is judged to be a good one. A fourth reason is because Broadfield is led and managed well. A few of you filled in questionnaires to let us know what you think of the school. You seem to agree with us.

What was particularly impressive was the way in which you are expected to do as much as you can for yourselves. You were acting in a very grown-up way, for instance, in the dining room, where you collect your own food and clear up after yourselves. It was also good to see so many of you helping each other in class and around the school. It is little things like these that show you are taking on responsibilities and becoming more independent.

We made two suggestions about things we thought could still be improved. One is to make sure that when you are asked questions you are always given enough time to answer them; the other is to keep finding more ways for Further Education students to join in with more practical activities.

Thank you once again. We wish you well for the future. Your teachers are working very hard to make your school even better. With your support and hard work it is highly likely they will succeed.

Yours sincerely,

Alastair Younger
Lead Inspector

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