

INSPECTION REPORT

SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL

Kirkby, Merseyside

LEA area: Knowsley

Unique reference number: 104495

Headteacher: Mr. Ian Cordingley

Reporting inspector: Steve Crowley
21947

Dates of inspection: 3rd April 2000

Inspection number: 188516

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cawthorne Southdene Kirkby Merseyside
Postcode:	L32 3XQ
Telephone number:	0151 549 1425
Fax number:	0151 546 8995
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Hart MBE
Date of previous inspection:	08/07/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Springfield School is a mixed special community school situated in Kirkby, Merseyside. A high proportion of its pupils and students come from socially and economically disadvantaged areas. The school caters for up to 80 full-time equivalent children and young people aged between 2 –19. At the time of the inspection of the 85 full and part-time pupils and students on roll, 35 were girls and 50 were boys. All pupils and students have statements of special educational need as a result of physical difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. In more recent years the special educational needs of the pupils referred have tended to be of a more severe and complex nature.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Springfield School is a very effective school whose pupils and students make very good progress in all areas of learning. Throughout the school pupils and students learn and achieve very well. The quality of teaching is very good and is significant strength of the educational provision. Consequently, pupils' and students' attitudes to school, behaviour and personal development are excellent. The school is very well led and many aspects of the management are outstanding. The money the school receives is used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning opportunities, promote better progress and achieve best value. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It promotes very good educational progress throughout the school.
- There is a high proportion of good, very good or outstanding teaching.
- Pupils and students are very keen to learn and their behaviour and personal development are excellent.
- The headteacher, governors, all staff and parents work very effectively together to create an ethos in which everyone continuously strives to improve.

What could be improved

- Curriculum planning for a small minority of pupils with more severe and complex special educational needs could be better referenced to the National Curriculum
- Progress in learning is inhibited where pupils and students from a wide age-range are taught together over long periods of time

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection in July 1996. The Key Issues from the previous report have all been addressed to at least satisfactory levels. The content of programmes of study have been suitably revised to ensure that pupils and students receive the breadth of experience appropriate to their learning needs. The curriculum is now well co-ordinated so that pupils learn systematically and in a progressive manner as they move through the school. However, where pupils remain in classes representing a very wide age range for long periods of time, progression in learning whilst at least satisfactory, is less secure. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the performance of individual pupils and that of the school in general are now very well developed and provide the school with useful information as to how further improvements may be effected. The school has made significant improvements and very effective use of the limited and somewhat inadequate accommodation available. Excellent collaborative work with the LEA and a local primary school has enabled shortcomings in the accommodation, identified in the previous report, to be overcome. In addition, the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies at Key Stages 1 and 2 and increased opportunities for accreditation at Key Stage 4 and Post 16, have improved curriculum opportunities and resulted in better motivated pupils and students. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly. The school now works with a wider range of mainstream schools providing good opportunities for integration. The quality of teaching has continued to

improve since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	By age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key very good A Good B Satisfactory C Unsatisfactory D Poor E
speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	
Reading	A	A	A	A	
Writing	A	A	A	A	
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	A	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Best progress is seen in English, mathematics, music and personal, social and health education. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 make very good progress as they work towards a suitable range of good opportunities for external accreditation. Pupils make very good progress in communication skills through the increased use of new and emerging technologies.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils and students speak very enthusiastically about the school. They arrive each morning expecting to be presented with challenging experiences and are keen to do the best they can. Almost all are aware of the progress they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent. Pupils and students try hard to control their impulses during lessons and particularly during whole school assemblies. They show kindness to one another and are courteous to visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils and students gain confidence and build self-esteem as they move through the school. They are very well motivated to succeed and take pride in their achievements. Almost all make very good progress towards individual targets that help them to achieve greater independence.
Attendance	Pupils and students maintain very good attendance. Although absence is 13.2% this is almost all authorised and due to hospital appointments.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5	Aged 5-11	aged 11-16	Aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It has a very positive impact on pupils' and students' learning. In well over nine out of ten lessons teaching was good or better and in over a half it was very good. Of the lessons observed only one, in modern foreign languages, was unsatisfactory. Teaching is at its best in English, mathematics, music and personal, social and health education. Lessons are very well planned and teachers communicate high expectations to the pupils and students. Consequently, pupils and students try hard to reach expectations which they recognise as achievable. Teachers and support staff work together as an effective team. They know the pupils' and students' strengths and weaknesses well and form excellent relationships with them. Each small step towards successful achievement is celebrated and shared with the individual and the group. This enables pupils and students to be aware of their own progress and has a very positive impact on motivation. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills are very well developed in a planned and spontaneous way in almost all lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school's curriculum provides good breadth, balance and relevance for the pupils and students for whom it caters. For children under five and those over sixteen it is very good. Curriculum provision is significantly enhanced through the constructive relationships formed with partner educational establishments.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Spiritual and moral development is very effectively promoted through regular assemblies as well as less formal opportunities as they arise. Pupils learn to interact and relate to others through a suitable range of social settings within and outside the school premises.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good support and guidance for all its pupils through maintaining effective teamwork with a range of professional support agencies.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very well supported by the deputy head. There is a clear vision for the future and very well planned strategies for achieving it, which are well understood by all staff and governors.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very involved in the life of the school and fulfils its responsibilities very effectively. Governors are very aware of the strengths of the school and keen to continue to improve. Their knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by all special schools in the future

	is a significant factor in helping the school remain well prepared for its own future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school continues to develop very effective strategies for evaluating its own performance. Excellent use is made of the information generated to improve future performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes excellent use of the resources available to ensure that its pupils derive the maxim educational benefit.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed • Pupils and students are happy and keen to attend school • The school works closely with parents • Teachers have high expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of parents felt that the school could provide more for pupils and students to do at home

The findings of the inspection team mostly support the views of parents. However, the school's homework policy was found to be suitably responsive to the individual needs of pupils and students so that they were given the right amount to do at home.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

It promotes very good educational progress throughout the school

1. Throughout the school pupils and students are expected to listen carefully to what is being said and express their reaction to lesson content in an appropriate manner. All pupils and students become more confident in communicating their thoughts and feelings as they move through the school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils and students to make effective use of new and emerging technologies for communication purposes. This has a positive impact on progress across the curriculum. By the time they leave school many students can provide well-sequenced explanations which follow a logical pattern. For example, during a module on "Getting ready to go out", one boy described what he packed into his suitcase before going on holiday and explained why mobile phones had to be turned off before the flight. They learn how to gain the attention of other pupils and students and communicate their needs very well. From the beginning of their time at the school pupils are introduced to a wide range of books and soon learn that they may be used for different purposes. Pupils and students are encouraged to regularly read to adults and are provided with skilful support that enables them to build on what they already know. The introduction of the National Literacy hour has improved pupils' and students' opportunities to understand, enjoy and make use of the written word. They are well supported and encouraged to communicate their thoughts, reactions and feelings wherever possible. Improved provision in the use of information and communication technology has helped pupils to produce examples of interesting and well-structured written work.
2. Good opportunities are provided across the curriculum for pupils and students to extend numeracy skills, building on the very good progress made during mathematics lessons. For example, in physical education pupils and students are required to regularly carry out activities that further develop counting skills. All pupils and students make very good progress during personal, social and health education. They gain awareness of their own bodies and the world around them from involvement in activities that require them to make full use of all of the senses available. Music is used particularly well to enhance pupils learning in all areas of the curriculum.
3. Individual education plans (IEPs) are used very well to ensure that pupils and students work towards targets that they know, understand and recognise as challenging but achievable. Pupils' and students' progress in meeting these targets is accurately assessed and recorded. This is very well communicated to pupils, students and their families through the annual review process. This helps pupils and students to be aware of their own progress and remain highly motivated to succeed.
4. Students over 16 make very good progress in response to a very well constructed curriculum that addresses their individual needs and interests while effectively preparing them for the next stage of their education, training or work.

There is a high proportion of good, very good or outstanding teaching

5. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It has a very positive impact on pupils' and students' learning. Teaching is at its best in English, mathematics, personal social and health education and music.
6. Teaching approaches are very well suited to the individual needs of the pupils and

students. Teachers are very knowledgeable regarding teaching methods that encourage pupils to fully use their senses when learning. This helps pupils and students to use their strengths in order to overcome weaknesses. Lessons are very carefully planned so that activities provide pupils with focused opportunities to work on individual objectives relating to, for example improvement in eye to eye contact, responding to their name or practising the stretching of limbs. Support staff are very aware of the specific objectives for each pupil or student. This results in very effective use of the time available for all concerned. Adults know the pupils and students very well and are constantly aware of the correct level of challenge required in order to maintain motivation. They inform the pupils and students constantly of how successful they have been and celebrate each small step towards achievement. Consequently, pupils and students persevere at tasks and make every effort to achieve well.

7. Classrooms are very well organised so that pupils can use equipment independently as well as can be expected. Good use is made of resources to help pupils achieve set objectives. All teachers and support staff have improved their own skills in the use of information and communication technology to help pupils and students communicate more effectively. All adults are mindful of the need to ensure that pupils' and students' dignity is maintained at all times. This helps and encourages pupils and students to take risks, confident that they will fully supported.

Pupils and students are very keen to learn and their behaviour and personal development are excellent

8. Pupils and students arrive at school expecting to have a busy day. Many were able to tell inspectors what activities they would be involved in at different times of the day. They are keen to engage and work hard throughout. By the end of a day at the school many pupils are very tired but still keen to try their best.
9. As pupils and students become more aware of the progress they make or the degree of independence they can achieve, they become increasingly motivated to learn. Many pupils interviewed were able to explain how they believed they had made recent academic or personal progress. This has a very positive impact on their self-esteem. They respond very well indeed to the wide range of internal awards and certificates presented during assemblies in recognition of their achievements. During these presentations, pupils and students openly show their appreciation of the achievements of others. They make great efforts to remain quiet while the principal speaker addresses the school, checking their own impulses in order to enable the group as a whole to benefit. By the time students reach their final years at the school, many have developed very good work habits and are keen to take advantage of the wide range of suitable opportunities provided for external accreditation.
10. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils of all ages relate positively to each other and provide help for each other wherever possible. The quality of the relationships between pupils and staff is outstanding and enables much of the provision at the school to be of such very good quality. Pupils and students respond very well to the high expectations staff have of them while feeling confident that their individual needs will be sensitively managed.

The headteacher, governors, all staff and parents work very effectively together to create an ethos in which everyone continually strives to improve

11. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very well supported by the deputy head. There is a very clear, shared vision of what the school is aiming to achieve and how it intends to achieve it. The development planning process provides all staff and governors with an opportunity to be actively involved in identifying the school's strengths and future needs. They feel they have an important role to play in shaping the future of the school and are very aware of national trends in education that may determine the context in which the school will develop. Governors and the senior management team have very effective strategies for evaluating the school's own performance and make excellent use of the information generated to improve future performance.
12. The quality of teaching is effectively developed through a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation which teachers and classroom support workers experience as supportive. All staff are prepared to reflect critically on their own performance and actively look for ways to improve.
13. The quality of teamwork throughout the school is excellent and has a very positive impact on the academic and personal progress of the pupils. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood so that those with delegated management responsibilities carry out their tasks effectively. Communication between supporting professionals, such as speech or occupational therapists, and teaching staff is good and ensures that pupils and students benefit significantly from their contribution.
14. Parents are regularly in the school and comfortably work alongside staff. The relationship between parents and staff is very good and suggestions for improvements in provision or more effective ways of enabling pupils and students to become more independent are exchanged in a relaxed and mutually supportive atmosphere.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Curriculum planning for a small minority of pupils with more severe and complex special educational needs could be better referenced to the National Curriculum

15. The number of pupils and students admitted to the school with more severe and complex special educational needs has increased in the last few years. Curriculum planning for this specific group is very detailed and suitably referenced to pupils' and students' stage of development but it is not yet fully referenced to the National Curriculum. The school is aware of the need to further develop this area and has started to address the issue.

Progress in learning is inhibited where pupils and students from a wide age-range are taught together over long periods of time

16. The school regularly reviews the effectiveness and appropriateness of the class groups throughout the school. Pupils and students are, in many cases, grouped according to their developmental stage. Consequently, some classes have pupils from a very wide age range across three key stages. The school takes great care to ensure that the curriculum, including all aspects of the National Curriculum, for these pupils is appropriately matched to their needs and provides continuity and progression in their learning. However, in a few cases where some pupils have remained in the same class for up to five years, continuity and progression in learning, whilst remaining at least satisfactory, is inhibited. The school has identified this within the development plan and

is taking appropriate action to make improvements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to build on the many strengths of the school, the headteacher and governors should now

- Ensure that curriculum plans for pupils with more severe and complex special educational needs are more closely referenced to the National Curriculum.
- Regularly review the appropriateness of grouping arrangements where pupils from a wide age-range are taught together for long periods of time and take appropriate action to ensure that progress in learning is not inhibited.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	46	34	4	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	85
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	13	School data	0.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	84
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y N – Y 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5 :1
Average class size	6.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y N – Y 13

Total number of education support staff	39
Total aggregate hours worked per week	833

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
	£
Total income	1,019,005
Total expenditure	1,026,478
Expenditure per pupil	13,160
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,786
Balance carried forward to next year	24,313

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	85
Number of questionnaires returned	50

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	24	2	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	36	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	18	14	14	0
The teaching is good.	88	10	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	20	0	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	20	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	24	0	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	24	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	24	18	4	0