



The Raeburn School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122162
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281173
Inspection dates 8 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Megee AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Raeburn Road
School category	Community special		Kingsley
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 7EU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 460017
Number on roll	48	Fax number	01604 460024
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr David R Lloyd

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Raeburn School is a secondary special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. About half the pupils have been diagnosed with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and receive medication to treat this. All but one of the pupils are boys, and many come from homes with significant levels of deprivation. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number from mixed heritage.

Most pupils transfer from a primary special school in Northampton. Other pupils are referred from local mainstream schools. During the past year, more than a third of the teachers left the school, and the school has found it difficult to replace them. The school should be fully staffed by September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Raeburn School provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education while supporting them well in their personal development. The school judges its own effectiveness as good overall, but the inspection finds that there is some work to do before it can demonstrate this. The school gives satisfactory value for money. It has resolved most of the issues arising at the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further.

The school's main strength lies in the way it guides and supports pupils to take control of their behaviour, and to develop well as young adults. Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory but has been affected by exceptional staffing difficulties and long-standing inadequacies in the accommodation. The staffing difficulties are nearly resolved, although the new staff are still settling in. Not all work is set at the right level or with sufficiently precise targets for every pupil. Attendance is satisfactory but still not as good as it could be. The curriculum is satisfactorily planned but the staffing and accommodation difficulties limit what is on offer. The headteacher provides solid leadership but the senior leadership team overall is not yet as effective as it should be in working to improve the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the effectiveness of the senior leadership team so that all of its members provide the necessary drive and direction for raising achievement.
- Bring about the necessary improvements in teaching, attendance and the curriculum so that all pupils make faster progress and achieve more in examinations.
- Set precise targets for pupils, share these with them and ensure that all staff know what they are and can help pupils to work towards them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils come into the school with standards below the national average, and they are still below average when they leave. This is to a large extent because of their special educational needs, which have led to significant gaps in their education. Given their starting points, once at the school their achievement is satisfactory. Faster progress is restricted by the lack of specialist facilities and relatively limited curriculum. For example, there is nowhere suitable for the pupils to undertake food technology. To add to the difficulties, there has been a high turnover of teachers during the past year.

These restrictions have had a particular impact on older pupils in Years 10 and 11, where the staffing difficulties meant that examination results in summer 2005 were lower than usual. Nevertheless, parents say that the school makes them optimistic about their children's future.

Although overall progress is satisfactory, it is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and there is no significant underachievement by any group of learners, including those on

medication. Most targets set by the school for pupils' performance in national tests or examinations have been achieved. The school plans to broaden the range of examinations it offers next year, which will give more opportunities for pupils to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in lessons and are friendly with each other during breaks. Parents are particularly appreciative of the turnaround in behaviour which the school achieves. Pupils make a clear distinction between right and wrong. Pupils exhibit politeness and courtesy throughout the day. There are good opportunities for reflection and spiritual development, particularly during the regular assemblies taken by one of the governors, who is a canon of a local church.

Pupils say that there is some bullying going on around the school, although they concede that incidents are well managed. Pupils say they enjoy being at the school, and their good attitudes in lessons reflect this. Most pupils attend regularly and the school is doing everything possible to encourage those who do not. The school has been particularly successful in reducing and limiting the number of incidents of aggression around the school, so making pupils feel secure and at home.

Pupils are aware of the need to make healthy lifestyle choices, participate fully in the many sporting opportunities on offer and many choose the healthy food options at lunchtime. The school has a comprehensive programme of educational visits which give pupils a good understanding of their own local culture as well that of others. The school provides frequent opportunities for pupils to develop the skills required for later life, although access to careers advice is limited. All pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience and have a taste of college life. There are good arrangements for contributing to the local community. One pupil spoke proudly of his work in a school for pupils with profound learning difficulties.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Three teachers left the school last year, and it has taken some time for new staff to get to grips with the demands of their different subjects and the special needs of the pupils. This process is now well underway and lessons are calm, orderly and well organised. Satisfactory learning is taking place, and pupils are involved productively in lessons. However, teachers do not always match the activities well enough to the needs of all the pupils. Academic targets, especially in English and mathematics, are not always written precisely enough, and pupils are not fully involved in setting them. Objectives are not consistently shared between staff so that pupils receive encouragement in working towards their targets throughout the day.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It covers all the required subjects and elements, and the school seeks to make it relevant to all the pupils. However, the cramped accommodation limits what can be offered and there is insufficient space for specialist practical subject areas, especially for food technology and drama. In Year 11, the range of examination courses is still quite narrow and too few pupils are entered for the higher levels. Pupils recognise these limitations and say that they would like more practical activities in the school. The school will be broadening the range next year.

In order to improve the provision for older pupils, the school has focused this year on the development of work-related learning. This is going well and pupils are now gaining opportunities to develop their enterprise and financial skills. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including residential experiences, a mobile visiting zoo, visiting circus and theatre in education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school fosters caring and thoughtful relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils. Pupils say that they all have someone in school to turn to if they are in trouble, who will give them support and kind, timely advice. One parent said, 'He likes the way he's treated here.' Staff manage the pupils' behaviour well with consistency and fairness, and this has led to the pleasant, calm atmosphere around the school. Good medical and child protection procedures are in place, and links with other agencies, especially the mental health and youth services, are strong. There has been some recent good work to improve attendance through the link with the education welfare service.

The particular needs of the pupils mean that many may sometimes put themselves or others at risk of injury. The school has good procedures in place for assessing and controlling this risk. As a result there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of incidents since the beginning of the year. The school has its own expert trainers who ensure that all staff know how to physically manage pupils when they become upset and lose control.

There are satisfactory arrangements to provide advice and guidance about careers and future training. The school recognises that it needs to further improve the quality of this advice, especially through the use of information and communication technology, in order to make it more accessible to the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher keeps his finger well on the pulse of everything that happens in the school. He leads his school from the front and is well supported by the chair of governors in establishing a calm and

well-ordered school. This has been in the face of considerable staffing problems, as well as the long-standing deficiencies in the accommodation.

The senior leadership team is not yet as effective as it should be in helping the headteacher to bring about improvements in the school. This is particularly the case with assessment and development of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11, where progress has not been as rapid as it should have been. The school improvement plan is based soundly on the school's self-evaluation and the views of both parents and pupils have been taken into account in its formulation. The headteacher has introduced an effective set of procedures to manage the performance of all staff, in order to bring about improvements at all levels.

Since the last inspection, the school has fully resolved all the weaknesses identified, apart from those concerned with accommodation and attendance. This track record shows that the school has the capacity to improve further. The school has tried very hard to raise levels of attendance but with limited success. The accommodation has been criticised in successive inspections and there has been little improvement over the years. Although this is outside the control of the school, staff have made the best they can out of the situation, and the school is well decorated and looked after. The accommodation remains a barrier to greater achievement. Plans are finalised for the school to move to a new building, but not until early 2008. This is still too far into the future for those pupils attending now.

The governors are well qualified and experienced and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They bring a wide and useful range of skills to bear upon their work, and provide dependable support and constructive challenge to the headteacher.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the courtesy and politeness you showed me when I visited your school this week. Thanks especially to the members of the school council who took the time to explain to me very clearly what they like about the school and where they think it could be improved. I appreciated their comments and the mature answers they gave me.

These are the things which are strong in your school:

You behave well.

You are pleasant, respectful and friendly with each other and the staff.

There is some bullying going on at the school, but it is usually well dealt with.

The school gives you good help and support to become the likeable, good-humoured young people you are.

These are the things which need to be improved:

Senior staff need to do even more to help improve the school.

Not everybody attends well enough.

You do not always have the right level of work, and not all your learning targets are set with you.

You don't need me to tell you that it is very important for your future to get the best results you can while you are at school. If your attendance is patchy, please try as hard as you can to get into school every day.