



# Ashfield Secondary Special School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 134658  
**LEA** Liverpool  
**Inspection number** 282633  
**Inspection dates** 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Frances Gander CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Childwall Abbey Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Childwall
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		0, Liverpool L16 5EY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 7226199
<b>Number on roll</b>	108	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 7220802
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr J Hay
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Paula Fitzpatrick

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	282633

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a new school for secondary aged students. It is designated as a school for students with complex learning difficulties. Many have additional sensory or medical needs, and some are autistic or have Asperger's Syndrome. It was opened 20 months ago and is located in the same building of the school it replaced. Since opening, it has admitted a large number of students from other special schools that have been closed. It also has an increasing number of vulnerable young people who have been absent from education for long periods of time. All students have, or are awaiting, a statement of special education need. Students mainly come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and the number of free school meals is much higher than the average. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school provides an outreach service which supplies support, advice and training to primary and secondary schools.

During the last year, the school was identified by the local authority for further reorganisation by possibly co-locating it on the site of a local high school. In July 2005, the headteacher left the school. It is managed by an acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It provides a good quality education which has some outstanding features. The school has overestimated its effectiveness as outstanding. It is successful in ensuring that students gain a wide range of external qualifications, which enables them to move on to further education and training. It improves the attendance of those who have been reluctant to attend education, and has successfully improved behaviour. Students' personal development and the care taken of students are outstanding. Students' behaviour during the inspection was excellent. They show that they respect and care for one another and enjoy the good range of learning experiences and activities that the school provides. Teaching is good overall but a few teachers are not consistently clear how to plan to help or extend student's learning. The school has focused very well on developing important initiatives, such as the well-being of students, extending the range of accreditation and the continuing success of the outreach service. These are strengths of the school. Managers are providing good leadership for the day-to-day running of the school, coping with the challenges of change, as well as developing new initiatives. They have developed satisfactory self-review systems for monitoring many areas of the school's work, and the progress of students. However, the evaluation of the information from this monitoring has slowed down during the unsettled period and recent changes. The school, therefore, does not have enough up-to-date information on how well it is doing. The school has a good capacity to succeed and offers good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers plan and use a range of different learning activities to more closely match the needs of students or extend their learning.
- Simplify and refine the self-evaluation so it provides up-to date information on all aspects of the school's work, and collect evidence to show how it has acted on the information.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. The team does not agree with the school's self-evaluation of outstanding achievement and progress. Students come into the school with many difficulties and much lower levels of academic and personal achievement than students of a similar age. The school works hard to ensure that all students gain a good range of accreditation, including GCSE, Entry Level Certificates, and units of accreditation. Students are well equipped to move on to further education or training courses. The school sets challenging targets based on students' assessments. The success of this can be seen in that almost half of the students in 2005 gained at least 2 GCSEs. This included some students who had transferred from other schools where they were not predicted to achieve any accreditation. The school has manual systems from which

sampling shows that students make good progress, including against the targets set in individual education plans (IEPs).

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of students is outstanding; in this, inspectors agree with the school's judgement. The school is meeting the well-being of students extremely well. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good but their spiritual development is less well developed. Students know how to be safe, secure and caring. Behaviour is excellent, as are pupils' attitudes to learning and enjoyment of school. This was borne out by one Year 10 student who felt that of the three schools she had attended, this one 'was the best as she had learnt more at this one'. The number of absences and exclusions has reduced due to the introduction of very effective behaviour management and the fact that it has been extremely well monitored and evaluated. Attendance is good. Students are encouraged to make a good contribution to the community through fund raising efforts. Students' basic skills of numeracy and literacy are well developed. Through the good work-related curriculum and their citizenship and student advocacy involvement, students gain a good understanding of economic well-being and workings of society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school regards this aspect of its provision as outstanding but the inspectors judge it as good. The majority of the teaching seen was good with some that was satisfactory. In the good lessons, students make good progress because the tasks and activities are matched to their differing needs and abilities, and careful consideration is given to individual challenge. Most lessons are paced well so students are motivated and attentive. The language used is uncomplicated and students fully understand what is required of them, such as in a Year 9 art lesson and a Year 10 pottery session. The shortcomings in satisfactory lessons include teachers often dominating the discussions so that students mainly listen and do not contribute. Occasionally, students' understanding is not checked effectively so that errors go unnoticed. However, there are examples of good practice, such as in a Year 9 design and technology lesson where students evaluated their classmates' work and talked about improving it.

Assessment is good overall. Students are assessed against National Curriculum attainment levels in each subject. These are recorded by teachers and the progress students make is reported in annual review reports. There is precise evaluation of progress in reading, and for behaviour. This is having a very positive effect on these two aspects.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school regards this aspect as outstanding. Inspectors judge it as good. All subjects taught, including drama, music and personal, social and health education (PSHE), are accredited and provide students with a wide range of qualifications and meet the needs of the students. The PSHE programme contributes well to the students' adoption of healthy and safe lifestyles. It raises their awareness of the harmful effects of drugs misuse. The alternative curriculum for a small number of Year 10 students provides them with the life skills they will need for the world outside school, and is very successful. Students are well prepared for the world of work with careers education taught from Year 7 and work experience opportunities in Year 11. Enterprise initiatives take place on a very regular basis and mean that the school is an extremely busy place with staff working very hard. The school is less well advanced, however, in evaluating the success of these initiatives in terms of achievement and students' progress. The staff provide a good range of enrichment opportunities at lunchtime and after school, as well as 'Art Weeks' and a host of residential experiences, including skiing trips to France, and cultural visits to Rome. These are popular with students and contribute extremely well to their overall enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Inspectors agree with the school and the parents that quality of care is outstanding. Every young person is treated with respect and dignity; in this school, every child matters. Students feel that the school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning. They have a trusted adult to turn to should they feel vulnerable, as one school council member stated, 'There is a wide choice of help available'. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are rigidly adhered to and understood by all staff. They know the students' personal circumstances and their difficulties very well. They involve parents and carers in efforts to enhance their learning. Students' achievements are celebrated well, and individual students' emotional well-being is accommodated. For example, some students who have been long-term school refusers are encouraged to attend through flexible timetabling. They settle and achieve well. The school provides strong support for vulnerable students and for those in public care.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judged this aspect of its provision as outstanding but inspectors felt that this was too generous. Leadership and management are good. The senior and middle managers take an active role in the day-to-day smooth running of the school and in the co-ordination of subjects. Governors are at the forefront of decision-making. Despite the changes and uncertainties of the past two years, the staff have maintained a great enthusiasm for developing and embarking on new initiatives. At the centre of

this has been the achievement and care of students, as well as establishing a well thought of and very well organised outreach service. These are strengths of the school.

Attention has been paid to whole school self-review, with information being collected about different aspects, but the evaluation of this information has slowed down and is not up-to-date or supported by clear and concise evidence. For example, teaching has not been monitored during this academic year and, therefore, the management were not aware that the learning needs of some students were not being met. There is no overall system through which progress of an individual or of a group of students, or within a subject can be analysed quickly and accurately. This hinders the school in its ability to spot swiftly any underachievement. A system to help the school achieve this was begun last year but has not been completed.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	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	NA	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	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	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

As you know, we recently visited your school to find out about what you do and how well you are being helped with your learning and to overcome any difficulties you may have. We would like to thank you all for being friendly, polite, well behaved and welcoming.

We agree with you and your parents that you attend a good school. Here is a list of all the things that we liked about it.

- How well your headteacher and teachers know and care for you.
- That you achieve well and leave school with a wide range of exam certificates.
- That you are taught by good teachers, and that you have many exciting educational opportunities outside the classroom.
- That your behaviour and attendance improves.
- How hard you try to get on well with everyone and build positive relationships.

This is what we have asked your school to do now, to make it even better.

- To make sure that all teachers use a wider range of different learning activities that are more closely matched to your abilities.
- To make sure that the school can show how well you are doing by collecting and analysing information.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at school.