



Maplewell Hall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120348
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 285552
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 2 May 2006
Reporting inspector Patricia Potheary AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Maplewell Road
School category	Community		Woodhouse Eaves
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 8QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01509 890237
Number on roll	127	Fax number	01509 891197
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Osborne
Date of previous inspection	17 November 2003	Headteacher	Miss Susan Yarnall

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 2 May 2006 - 2 May 2006	Inspection number 285552
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Maplewell Hall caters for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most students have moderate learning difficulties, but 25% have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and a significant minority have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few students have more complex learning difficulties. The sixth form is reserved as a specialist centre for students with ASD. There is one specialist class for students with ASD aged 11 to 16. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with a small group from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. There is official boarding provision for two sixth form students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Maplewell Hall provides a sound education and satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has had serious difficulties in attracting and retaining suitable staff, and this has inevitably slowed the pace of change. The strength of the leadership and management is evident in the wide range of improvements that have been made despite this barrier. There is the capacity to improve further. A good programme of monitoring and support for teachers has had a strong impact in much of the school where students learn well and enjoy what they do. It has had less impact on the teaching and learning of students in the sixth form and those with ASD in the special class, which remain generally satisfactory.

Students make good progress in their personal development, gaining the maturity and confidence to work hard and help others. They receive good support and guidance to help them keep safe and reach their goals. Though progress in academic subjects is satisfactory overall, including the sixth form, many of the students with moderate learning difficulties do well. There are good opportunities for all students to experience an extended day.

Self-evaluation is developing well, and data is collected effectively. The school is accurate in its assessment of itself. However, the information collected on students' progress is not yet analysed in enough detail to fine tune planning for improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education, a view shared by the leadership team. Students achieve steadily, with many being keen to learn and attend school, often for the first time. The curriculum is sound and provides improved opportunities to gain accreditation in key skills and attend college for part of the week. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but lacks the proportion of good teaching evident for the younger students. The accommodation is not attractive and is cramped in parts. Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory and has ensured improvements since the last inspection. However, the sixth form lacks input from subject specialist staff and other improvement initiatives found in the rest of the school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 9

Boarding provision is limited to two official students, and so the school uses the facilities to provide enriching extended day and residential opportunities to all students in the school on a rotating basis. The Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) report indicates that boarding provision is good and contributes substantially to the education and well-being of students. This view is shared by inspection team. It meets

all relevant National Minimum Standards. Students, including the permanent residents, appreciate and value the opportunities offered. The accommodation is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve retention of staff, involving all staff in the process.
- Improve teaching and learning in the sixth form and ASD class by sharing best practice from the rest of the school.
- Refine self-evaluation through more critical analysis, in order to clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement in students' progress. Link this more effectively to planning for improvement across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' achievement remains satisfactory overall despite many good improvements, largely because of a lack of stability caused by frequent changes of staff. Nevertheless, almost all students make steady gains in national curriculum point scores each year. Whole-school targets in speaking, listening and reading are met well. Each year students have achieved an increasing number of qualifications. Almost all parents are satisfied with how well their children do.

Progress is satisfactory but there are some variations. Significant numbers of students aged 11 to 16 make good progress. Students do well in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Students who are looked after by the local authority and those who have received purposeful additional support with their reading have made very good improvement. Sixth formers gain key skills and other qualifications, which represents substantial achievement for some, although others lack challenge and their progress is only satisfactory overall. In the special class for students aged 11 to 16 with ASD, progress is generally satisfactory, rather than good, because of the difficulties in providing sufficient challenge across the wide age range.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good personal development of students is evident in their growing confidence and maturity. This is particularly appreciated by parents. Attendance is satisfactory and many students have greatly improved attendance since leaving their previous schools. Students generally enjoy school, work conscientiously and value the help they are given. Students also have a good understanding of the need to eat the right foods. They also take part in physical activities with enthusiasm, and are justifiably proud of their achievements. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, they think deeply about a wide range of issues, reflect on their actions and nearly all show a good sense of right and wrong. As a result, they feel safe at school, make safe choices and the vast majority behave well. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are beginning to respond well to the skilled support they receive. This is resulting in a reduction of the high number of fixed-term exclusions

experienced last year. Students prepare themselves well for the future through success, and growing independence in, Business Enterprise courses, Duke of Edinburgh Award projects and during work experience. Many students take responsibilities around the school and contribute well to the community through the school council, for example, initiating a 'Fair Trade' tuck shop.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory and improving teaching is resulting in the evident improvements in students' learning. The school has made significant inroads into developing a more consistent quality of teaching despite the very high turnover of staff in the last three years. For students aged 11 to 16, teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. Careful attention to planning, good assessment for meeting students' different needs and more specialised subject teaching are evident in many lessons. This is still not fully consistent, however, and some lessons lack pace and fail to engage students well. In the sixth form and special class for students with ASD, teaching is generally satisfactory. Sixth form teachers have good relationships with the students and are very successful in helping them to feel confident in learning. However, sixth form and ASD class lessons often lack the sharpness of planning, challenge and variation of strategies to motivate students to work harder. There is good practice in the school, which could be better shared with these classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has a strong focus on reading, number, ICT and life skills, which prepares students well for the future. It has improved since the last inspection, with much better opportunities for students with ASD to be included in the main school and increased accreditation. Students in the sixth form have good opportunities to gain key skills and attend college, although some find that topics are repeated. The main difficulty with the curriculum is linked to staff turnover, with vacancies, for example, in physical education and music, both traditionally strong subjects. The school was however re-accredited with the Sports Mark Gold Award this earlier year with support from specialist outdoor education and sports coaching. Although now strong in the core subjects, constantly changing staff limits the opportunity to broaden and develop the curriculum further.

A rich array of additional activities and social opportunities are offered to all students through visits and regular turns at boarding during the week. They enjoy these experiences and learn much from them. The well-planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme teaches students how to stay safe and live healthy lives very effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff have detailed knowledge of students' learning, personal and medical needs and use this to support, guide and care for them well. Thorough tracking of each student's progress provides a good basis for guiding them in their work during annual reviews. Older students and those in the sixth form have good opportunities to choose their courses with effective guidance from staff. There are effective systems to ensure the health and safety of students. Parents speak very highly of the quality of the school's care of their children. Working relationships between the school and other professionals are good and contribute much to students' well-being. Students are given good guidance to help them improve their behaviour and develop their social skills. When students board, they have good facilities and are cared for very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school continues to improve, despite severe difficulties in attracting and retaining staff. There is strong support from an experienced governing body. The headteacher has shown indomitable commitment in the face of difficulties and, with staff, has established an ethos in which there is a clear direction and high quality care.

Among several significant developments since the last inspection is a well-structured programme to monitor, manage and improve teaching. The effectiveness of core subject leaders has also improved substantially and is now good. This has resulted in increases in students' progress and qualifications year on year. These more rigorous systems are not having enough impact in the sixth form or specialist ASD class, which are not developing at the same rate as the rest of the school.

Self-evaluation is much improved. The school is accurate in its overview and it involves parents and the local authority well, seeking their views and acting on advice. The collection of data to show how well students are doing is also greatly improved. It is not yet organised well enough to enable managers to ask highly searching questions and decide in detail where improvements are most needed.

The staffing issue, which is the main barrier to faster improvement, has many causes, including the impact of the previous report and the perception of an insecure future owing to local authority re-organisation. Many of the current staff, including teaching assistants, have some very good skills to offer. The senior team has worked hard to stabilise staffing and things are improving. However, they are not exploiting all avenues to discover anything else the school might do. In particular, they do not involve staff in any evaluation which might highlight ways in which their satisfaction might be increased.

Resources are much improved, but accommodation, especially for the sixth form, remains limited in many respects, despite several improvements since the last inspection.

The school uses links with local schools, colleges and the local authority well to provide for students.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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

Dear Students,

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming to us when we visited Maplewell Hall; we enjoyed the time we spent with you very much. We can see why you find the school such a good place to learn. We also enjoyed meeting the staff and joining you for lunch and some of your lessons.

What we liked most about your school:

- How you enjoy learning and the steady progress you make towards your targets and qualifications.
- How well you contribute to the way the school is run.
- The mature way you behave, help others, and work so hard in lessons.
- The interesting activities you take part in.
- The way the staff really care for you and guide you in your work.
- The way school managers keep improving the school.

What we have asked the school to do now to improve further:

- Try hard to help more of your teachers stay at the school for longer.
- Look more closely at how well you are doing and decide where some of you could be helped to do even better.
- Share more of the ideas, which help you do well, with the sixth form and class LI.

We wish you all the very best in the future,

Yours sincerely, Mrs. Patricia Potheary Lead Inspector