

Spa School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100873
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	285905
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
6th form	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Verity Mihai
Headteacher	Mr Simon Eccles
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	Monnow Road London SE1 5RN
Telephone number	020 7237 3714
Fax number	020 7237 6601

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

The school provides for students who have statements of special educational needs for their diagnoses of autism or Asperger's syndrome. Currently, students come from 14 different local authorities and just under a half live outside the borough. All students have difficulty with social interaction and social communication and invariably have a range of moderate and increasingly, severe learning and behavioural difficulties. Consequently, they have a very wide range of ability. Students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and just under a half are eligible for free school meals, a high proportion. Around two thirds of students are from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups with the largest being from black British, African or Caribbean family backgrounds. Only one in eight students are girls. Four students are in the care of local authorities. The school has two sites, one (The Annexe) supporting a very small group of students with especially complex needs and very challenging behaviour. The school has the Healthy School award. The headteacher took up position less than a year ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school that has many good and some outstanding features. The headteacher is providing clear leadership and has correctly identified what the school needs to do to improve. He is effectively supported by the new senior leadership team who have clear roles and responsibilities, and who are fully committed to school improvement. Students' achievement is at the heart of all decision making, with systematic procedures being developed and implemented to improve provision and learning opportunities for all. The capacity to improve is good. A parent representing the views of many wrote, 'Spa School is an excellent school with a deep commitment to children on the autistic spectrum'. This commitment is clearly evident and teamwork in the school is a strength. Staff are keen to extend their knowledge and skills to ensure they meet the increasingly challenging needs of all students. School procedures for consultation and self-evaluation are good, and the school is clear about what it needs to do to improve and it knows how to do it. A very positive and safe learning environment has been created and relationships are excellent. Students trust adults and this enables them to make the best of all their opportunities in school. The school works extremely effectively in partnership with a range of external agencies to ensure that learning opportunities and care and support is effectively coordinated to meet students' needs.

Standards vary enormously, but overall are well below average due to the severity of their learning difficulties. There are, however, individual students who reach age related standards in subjects such as music, art and physical education. Given their starting points, and the various barriers to their learning, achievement is satisfactory with many students making good gains, particularly in aspects of their personal development, social interaction and communication. They gain in confidence and develop good attitudes to their learning. Older students engage in work-related activities, attend college and achieve a variety of appropriate accredited courses. Their involvement with the community is outstanding. Essential skills are learned through their involvement in a broad variety of activities, in and outside of school. This very effectively prepares them for the next stage in their learning or for life after school. This is as a result of the excellent relationships, satisfactory teaching, guidance and the outstanding care and support they receive. Although procedures to assess and track students' progress are developing well, the school is aware there is a way to go before they are firmly established in practice. Information on students' progress is not yet consistently used by all teachers in their planning, resulting in a lack of challenge for a small number of students. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and they receive good support and encouragement to increasingly understand what acceptable behaviour is, and what is not, in different learning and social settings. The great majority love coming to school and they clearly understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and what it means to keep safe. Students are encouraged to take on individual responsibility, such as being part of the school council and travelling independently. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is firmly embedded in the everyday life of the school. The curriculum is very well supported by visiting specialists and activities in the community and generally meets the needs of the great majority of students. The school does not yet have rigorous procedures to continually review the curriculum, to meet the increasingly complex needs of its students. It is now addressing this. Governors are well-informed and take an active part in monitoring, self-evaluation and in the strategic management of the school.

Students who attend the Annexe have their very complex and challenging learning and social needs met by a dedicated group of staff. However, the accommodation, particularly the lack

of outside space does not support their overall development. Clearly, the leadership and management have begun to have a very positive impact on provision. This is because action is being taken to address the most important issues to improve students' learning opportunities and achievement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Post-16 students follow the 'Towards Independence' and Certificate in Life Skills modules that help develop their social, community and life skills that will support them when they leave school or go on to placements in colleges of further education. They make good progress in their personal development, gaining confidence and self-esteem through their successes. This is as a result of the excellent relationships, care and support they receive for their individual needs. Students enjoy opportunities for work experience and have appropriate opportunities to gain successes in accredited courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils' achievements are clearly tracked to give an accurate picture of their progress over time.
- Ensure that teachers use the information on students' progress in their planning to meet and challenge the needs of all individuals.
- Ensure the curriculum is effectively monitored and developed to ensure it continually meets the needs of all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Overall, standards are well below average because of the severity of students' learning difficulties. Despite these difficulties, their progress and achievement are at least satisfactory, and for many students are good, in relation to their individual targets. Older students gain successes in accredited courses and learn to be more independent and self aware. They improve their ability to listen and communicate clearly and to behave appropriately in different learning and social settings. Students learn to become more responsible for their own behaviour and to understand what is expected of them in different settings. Previous inconsistencies in the monitoring and recording of students' progress have been identified and addressed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They are aware of themselves, others and the environment, and become as independent as possible through good support. They enjoy all activities because of the positive learning environment, and their attendance is good. Students make excellent contributions to the community. They raise money for charities, maintain local community gardens and help people understand about autism through exhibitions and the partnerships with theatre and sporting groups. Students feel safe and understand healthy lifestyles. They acquire useful skills working in local shops and attending college courses and make particularly good progress in their social communication skills. Elected members of

the school council have the opportunity of discussing issues that are important to the school and the satisfaction of knowing their views are seriously considered. Students' personal development is strong because it is firmly embedded in the everyday life of the school and in the many additional opportunities that are arranged outside of school. A parent reported, 'The Spa School is the best thing that has ever happened for our son. He has improved in leaps and bounds. He has grown from a reserved boy into a young man with many talents. Thank you'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students are making satisfactory progress overall as a result of satisfactory teaching, with a number of good lessons. Regular monitoring and support strategies take place and expectations for improvement are made clear. Students make progress towards their individual targets, but these are not always monitored and reviewed often enough or integrated sufficiently into planning. Lessons are made interesting for students, and the majority understand what is expected of them. Excellent relationships, team work and appropriate training enable the staff to confidently manage students' behaviour, so that students are happy in their work. The school recognises that there is a lack of consistency across the school in teachers' assessment, planning and the recording of students' progress. There is a positive ethos of reward and celebration of all individual achievement, giving students the confidence to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum offers a satisfactory and broad range of experiences for the great majority of students and it supports their good personal and satisfactory academic development. The school is developing the curriculum for those students with more severe learning difficulties and with little or no verbal communication to ensure their needs are more fully met. Personal, social and health education, and citizenship make a significant contribution to students' growing self-confidence and maturity. A good range of additional 'real life' experiences are offered including work-related learning and enterprise projects. An Indian restaurant project resulted in students preparing and serving Indian food to invited parents and staff. Afterwards, a parent remarked that she was amazed at how socially confident her son had become. Students greatly appreciate the trips outside of the school, the clubs and residential journeys, all of which greatly enhance the curriculum and students' learning opportunities. Accredited courses, including Entry Level and GCSEs, college placements and work related opportunities help to meet students' needs and effectively prepare them for when they leave school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The pastoral care and support for students are outstanding and the combination of efficient school procedures and practice keeps students safe and secure while helping them to acquire the skills of independence. Safeguarding students is at the heart

of clear procedures which are understood by all staff. The effective team work amongst all staff ensures that there are consistent approaches and support for all students. A parent wrote, 'my son has settled extremely well and says he feel safe and comfortable. He enjoys school very much and I feel he has made a great deal of progress in a very short time'. Students receive ongoing guidance that helps them make satisfactory academic and good personal progress. Excellent partnership work with support agencies ensures that the personal needs of students are well met. Partnership with parents is excellent as is the communication between school and home. A parent wrote, 'all the staff are very helpful and are always willing to answer any questions when asked'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school recognises that although a number of improvement measures implemented have improved much of the provision, they have yet to make an impact upon students' achievement. There are good self-evaluation processes in place and development planning is clearly a result of the monitoring and consultation and is directly linked to improving students' achievement and learning opportunities. The senior leadership team have high expectations of themselves and others and, together with all the staff, are committed to making a difference and ensuring all students get the best possible chances to succeed. Through thorough monitoring, the school is clear what needs to be done to improve school provision and is well on the way to ensuring improvement strategies become embedded in practice. Opportunities for further professional development are very good and are clearly linked to school and personal improvement and leads to students' needs being effectively met.

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Annex A

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?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school, I really enjoyed being with you. I especially enjoyed my lunch in the Casanova Curry House where the food and service were excellent. I also enjoyed playing chess with some very good players.

It was obvious that you enjoy coming to school and meeting your friends and you get on very well with all the adults. Your parents are very supportive of the school and are happy that you are doing well in lessons and are learning skills that will be useful to you when you leave school. The school supports your individual needs and ensures that you make satisfactory progress in your learning and good progress in your personal development. The school knows what it has to do to make things even better for you and you can help by listening carefully in lessons and always behaving the best that you can. I particularly liked the fact that:

- all staff care for and support you exceptionally well
- you learn to do things for yourself and you are friendly and polite to everyone
- you enjoy your lessons and the trips outside of school
- there is excellent communication between the school and your home
- the school ensures that you all learn as well as you can and works extremely well with other people to ensure you receive the support you need
- your headteacher is determined to improve the school further and, with all the adults in the school, is working hard to help you make even better progress in the future
- the school governors know and support the school really well.

There are a few things the school knows it can improve upon:

- They can ensure your progress is checked and recorded in a consistent way so they know how well you are doing as you get older.
- They can regularly look at the curriculum to make sure it continually meets all your needs.
- They can make sure that the work in lessons makes you think really hard and meets all your different needs.

Once again, thank you for being so friendly and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Smith Lead inspector