



Green Arbour School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106970
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287667
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Henry Moreton

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Locksley Drive
School category	Community special		Thurcroft, Rotherham
Age range of pupils	7–16		South Yorkshire S66 9NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 542539
Number on roll (school)	73	Fax number	01709 703198
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs E Lopez
		Headteacher	Mrs Anne Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group 7–16	Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006	Inspection number 287667
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Willows is a school for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties from across the Rotherham local authority. Formerly known as Green Arbour School it opened on its new site in September 2006.

All pupils have a statement of special educational need and enter the school with low levels of attainment. The vast majority of pupils are White British and only a very small number are from minority ethnic groups. Five pupils are looked after by the local authority. More than 40% have free school meals; this is above average. Two pupils are registered on the roll of a mainstream school.

As a consequence of the school's response to its last inspection the local authority undertook a formal review of progress. This concluded that there were significant weaknesses in leadership. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2004, and was joined by a deputy headteacher in January 2006 and by an assistant headteacher in September 2006.

In December 2006 the school was removed from the local authority's 'causing concern' category.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Willows has turned a corner. It is a satisfactory and improving school. Following the previous inspection it went through a period of turbulence which resulted in changes in its leadership. The headteacher joined the school just over two years ago. This was a critical appointment. Her calm and determined approach has proved to be just what this school needed. Throughout she has been very well supported by ably led governors. Difficult issues have been tackled and the school is in a strong position to improve.

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. This is made possible by sound management. Pupils are provided with a balanced and relevant range of academic and vocational activities but accreditation of their achievements is inadequate. Pupils' attitude to learning is good and they enjoy school. The new subject choices for older pupils are proving successful. Pupils are cared for appropriately in a safe environment and the new accommodation is helping to raise the aspirations of staff and pupils. Together with the change of name everyone sees this as helping to start a new chapter in the school's history.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some good or better teaching was seen during the inspection. Pupils make appropriate progress in the development of social skills and independence so that by the time they leave school they are equipped to cope with the next step in their life. Information collected about pupils' progress is used to evaluate their improvement over time but is not used consistently to provide challenge in all lessons, including for the more able pupils. Some subject specialists are beginning to teach their subjects throughout the school, which is helpful in giving them a better understanding of how well pupils are doing.

The partnership between the school and outside agencies ensures that pupils are well supported, though too few parents and carers are involved in its work. Resources are effectively and efficiently managed to secure sound value for money. The capacity to improve is good because the necessary building blocks are in place. The rate of progress made since the school was established on this site less than four months ago has been good and school leaders understand what more needs to be done.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully accredit pupils' achievements in academic and vocational courses.
- Use information gained in measuring pupils' progress to ensure that teachers pitch lessons at the right level, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Involve more parents in the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When they join the school, pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean their attainment is below the levels found in mainstream schools. Standards throughout

the school are low. However, pupils' achievement is satisfactory because they are making steady progress. The school has built up a good picture of pupils' progress through a system of recording their progress in very small steps. As pupils move through the school they develop their knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics and science at a satisfactory pace. Provision for information and communication technology is enhanced by much improved facilities, and there is a comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education.

All pupils develop in confidence because of the support they receive. Nearly all Year 11 pupils leave with external accreditation in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network at Bronze or Silver level. This is too limited, especially for the more able pupils. However, the Year 11 pupils are on course to achieve well at entry level GCSE English in 2007, with science in 2008 and mathematics to follow. The school's targets for Year 11 pupils to achieve were not all met in 2006. A number of reasons contributed to this, including staffing changes. The current Year 11 pupils are on course to meet their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

This is not as good as the school's evaluation indicates. Most pupils enjoy school and are happy to take on responsibilities. Their attendance is satisfactory. Exclusions are rare. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe. They know about how important it is to be healthy but do not always put this knowledge into practice. The school's use of certain foods as rewards for positive behaviour and good work is inappropriate. Although some pupils find it hard, they understand class and school rules and make a big effort to meet their behavioural targets where they exist. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was good in and out of lessons. This is because of the quality of relationships and improved teaching and curriculum planning. The contribution of the large number of non-teaching staff is significant in supporting individual pupils' development. Pupils' social and moral development is good. They have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. The school council is proving successful and was pivotal in deciding on the new uniform. Pupils and staff say that the school is now a much calmer place than it used to be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is improving at a good pace. There has been considerable development in the introduction of a whole-school approach to teaching, largely driven by the senior leadership team. As a result the quality of learning is now satisfactory overall and improving. The school has a realistic view of the quality of its teaching and learning through regular monitoring, which has highlighted aspects of teaching to be improved. Examples of good and understanding teaching were observed during the inspection.

The staff have worked hard to develop effective approaches to managing behaviour and this has resulted in a positive climate for learning. In the better lessons, pupils make good progress because effective assessment ensures that teaching meets pupils' needs. It builds motivation by encouraging short-term success, helping students to work independently. This practice is not spread widely enough across the school.

Assessment systems are in place to record pupils' progress over time. The quality of these systems is variable. There is good information about pupil's progress in the different subjects but this is not used as well as it could be, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4, to inform lesson planning and to set work that is always challenging, especially for the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy lessons, especially in science, design and technology and physical education. The enrichment programme is limited because the school grounds are not ready for use. The range of accreditation at Key Stage 4 is limited though suitable opportunities are offered to pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 to attend local colleges and to take part in work experience. The curriculum for these pupils has recently been developed to provide much greater choice, relevance and challenge. As a result pupils' engagement has improved significantly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care is satisfactory. The pastoral care for pupils is a key factor in the calm atmosphere in the school. Staff know pupils well and make sound use of this information to support them. Child protection requirements are met. The personal, social and health education programme provides adequate sex education and raises pupils' awareness of the harmful effects of drug misuse and the importance of healthy eating. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next, but use of this information is inconsistent in planning lessons. The school has made productive links with a wide range of professionals to support pupils' particular needs. To support vocational provision for older pupils links with a range of external providers are developing rapidly. Parental questionnaires show that while the great majority of them are very happy with the school, some have concerns suggesting that communication with them is not as good as it might be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and the school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that despite its past troubles it is emerging well from a fragile state. With continuing support

from governors and the local authority the senior management team has a solid base for future development.

The headteacher provides clear leadership and has managed change very well. She has a sense of purpose, and with the deputy headteacher, is concerned to secure improvements through rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluation. The school has high expectations of behaviour and, increasingly, of achievement. Astute use has been made of external consultants who are greatly valued by staff as a means of developing their teamwork. As a result there is a shared vision for the future.

Governance complies with statutory requirements. Governors provide a suitable balance of challenge and support to senior managers. They have a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas in need of development, and have played a key role in school improvement. The contribution of the large number of non-teaching staff is recognised and valued at all levels. Considering that the school has only been functional on this as yet unfinished site since September 2006, it is developing well. Because of effective leadership and management, achievement and the quality of teaching are now improving.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently.

As well as the Christmas lunch (!) I particularly liked these things about your school:

- your lovely new building and the way you wear your new uniform with pride
- the way you behave in class and around the school
- the way that the school governors support your staff
- the new and exciting subject choices the older pupils have.

These are the things I have suggested those in charge of the school do to make it better:

- make sure you leave with more qualifications; you can help by trying hard in every lesson
- use the information it has about you to plan more difficult work; you can help by telling your teachers if you find the work too easy
- involve more of your parents or carers in the work of the school; you can help by telling them about the work that you do.

I am pleased that you enjoy your new school building and I am sure the play areas will be ready soon. I wish you every success for the future.