

Caldecott Foundation School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119027
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291293
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	49
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Angus Fraser board
Headteacher	Chris Tapley
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
School address	Station Road Smeeth Ashford TN25 6PW
Telephone number	01303 815665
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school admits pupils from across the United Kingdom. Virtually all of them are in public care. They have all been permanently excluded from their previous schools and the majority have a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. On a separate site, the school owns and manages an assessment unit that offers residential accommodation and educational facilities. Local authorities can place children in care there for up to six months when they want detailed assessments carried out in order to determine the best long-term placement for the child.

The majority of pupils have a White British background and all of them speak English as their first language. The majority are resident in the school on a seven day, 52 week basis. A few pupils are fostered locally and attend the school on a daily basis.

When the school was inspected in 2005 it was judged to have serious weaknesses in its management and the learning and achievement of the pupils. An interim headteacher was appointed after that inspection but he left three weeks before this one began. The deputy headteacher at that point took on the role of acting headteacher. A new permanent headteacher will be in post in September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Caldecott Foundation School has improved and it now provides a satisfactory standard of education. This is because leadership and management have improved and are now good, and the school's leaders have successfully addressed the other weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the pupils are now well taught, follow a good curriculum and receive good care, guidance and support. Much of the improvement in the quality of provision has occurred recently and so pupils' achievement still lags behind the quality of education they receive. The pupils now make good progress in their lessons but due to the legacy of underachievement from before these improvements, their academic progress is still not better than satisfactory over the time many of them have been in the school. The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low in national terms because of their history of disrupted schooling and the nature of their learning difficulties. The potential for pupils to achieve better is restricted by shortcomings in the ways in which the pupils' work is assessed and the quality of feedback on how to improve, but this is now satisfactory and improving.

The improved tone of the school has had a more immediate impact upon the pupils' personal development and well-being, which is now good. Their lives have become more stable and their self-esteem has improved. As a result, their enjoyment of school has increased, they attend more frequently and they have become more enthusiastic learners. The residential provision is satisfactory in the way in which it supports and extends the pupils' personal and academic development. It does this well informally, but the formal systems for doing this are not sufficiently well structured. The school has satisfactory links with its partners, such as local schools, to support the academic and personal progress of the pupils. The work of the assessment unit is good as pupils work in a very calm and settled atmosphere. Staff have a clear understanding of their role in evaluating the pupils' key academic and personal skills and they do this effectively.

Leaders and managers, including increasingly effective and influential trustees in their role as governors, have the ability to refine and build on what has been achieved over the past two years. This is because they all have a good understanding of how they want the school to evolve even though this is not based on self-evaluation procedures that enable them to check routinely how well the school is doing. For instance, the pupils' achievements are not tracked in the most efficient way and so leaders do not routinely analyse this information and use it in their plans to raise standards. The school's track record in securing good progress, the clear direction it has set for itself and its secure evaluation of its major remaining weaknesses show that it has a good capacity to continue improving.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 3

All seven residential houses were inspected and reported upon separately by inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection between May and September 2006. Across the residences as a whole, the minimum care standards were generally met. In a few instances, in different houses, individual minimum care standards were exceeded and in some other cases the standard was not quite met. Each house's action plan shows that good progress has generally been made in addressing the points for development.

The houses make a satisfactory contribution to supporting the pupils' personal development. Pupils are expected to help out in the house community and those with poor social skills are encouraged to become more tolerant and communicative. However, this is not supported formally through planned and structured programmes involving both education and care staff. This situation is mirrored in the way that the pupils' academic progress is supported. Pupils frequently extend and enrich their learning through off-site visits but the opportunities for care staff to support what pupils have learned in the classroom are more limited. While there are arrangements for care staff to support pupils with homework or to listen to them read, these opportunities to extend pupils' learning are not wholly effective because they are not fully coordinated, with all necessary information shared between school and care staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put in place rigorous and robust systems for the routine monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, including arrangements to track the progress of individual pupils.
- Implement a reliable system for assessing pupils' work and showing pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Establish procedures for residential care staff to support and guide the pupils' personal development and learning more effectively.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pupils are working at a level that is significantly below that expected of children of their age. This is because frequent periods of turmoil in their personal lives have resulted in long periods of non-attendance at school through truancy and exclusions.

Pupils' make good progress in their lessons because they are taught well. However, their overall progress since joining the school, in acquiring the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and in developing new knowledge and understanding of their other subjects is no better than satisfactory. This is because they are still overcoming the legacy of underachievement that existed when the educational provision had significant weaknesses. They are now catching up and making more sustained progress, as shown by one pupil who said, 'When I came here I couldn't read; now I can.' Initiatives, such as setting pupils in the secondary department, are forcing the pace of learning. An increasing number of skilled teachers enables pupils to build more effectively on their prior learning as they move through the school. The faster progress is supported by the improved assessment of pupils' work but senior leaders realise that limitations in assessment and tracking procedures are still holding back the pupils' potential to progress more quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures enable the pupils to establish themselves gradually in a new environment. As their confidence grows and they become accustomed to the routines they become better equipped to deal with the expectations made of them. Consequently, their

attendance at school is good and most of the time they behave well in lessons, displaying positive attitudes to their learning. As a result, they become more confident communicators and more active participants in lessons. This high level of enjoyment provides a good platform for them to learn well and it provides an impetus for them to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They understand the dangers of drugs and alcohol and enjoy physical activities, including outdoor pursuits. The pupils know about healthy eating but think that the school does not have a consistent approach to putting this into practice. The pupils have a good awareness of how to remain safe. They confirm that any bullying is dealt with quickly and are confident that there is always someone to turn to when worried. The pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. They do this in school through, for example, the school council, but there are limited opportunities to do it elsewhere, for instance in local community projects. Workplace skills, including the pupils' basic academic skills, are developing satisfactorily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The pupils are taught well. Teachers are organised and lessons are well planned in a way that builds on pupils' earlier learning. Planning identifies what is anticipated that the pupils will learn next and this is shared with them at the beginning of lessons and reviewed at the end. This involves pupils well in their learning. Activities are well matched to individual pupils' needs and this reflects a high level of expectation. The pupils respond to the challenge and, therefore, their learning is good. They are enthusiastic, keen to participate and increasingly able to work either independently or with others. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils in a design and technology lesson worked very diligently and independently on designing a greetings card. A class of primary aged pupils were equally impressive when working as a group in a question and answer session on two dimensional shapes and lines of symmetry. They answered questions carefully, listened to others and were confident in going to the front and using the interactive whiteboard.

The quality of pupils' learning is enhanced considerably by the big strides that they take in their personal development. This reflects the strong relationships between pupils and teachers and teaching assistants and the level of trust between them. This enables adults to have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quickly and this minimises the disruption to the pupils' own or others' learning. Teachers use evaluations of their pupils' learning to plan future lessons, but other aspects of assessment are not as effective. Teachers have not always assessed pupils' achievements and determined their National Curriculum levels accurately. Consequently, target setting lacked reliability and so the pupils could not be given realistic and challenging targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum broadly matches the National Curriculum but it is adapted well to meet the particular needs of the pupils. Planning shows a strong focus on encouraging pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in discrete lessons and through other subjects. The personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory and undergoing development to make it more

suited to pupils' ages. Both boarding and day pupils benefit academically and socially from a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, such as a recent trip to Wales. Community visits 'bring alive' classroom-based learning and allow the pupils to practise in different situations what they have learned in school.

Recent developments have improved the curriculum of the secondary aged pupils and now it prepares them better for leaving school, although this continues to be an area that the school is developing. The school has worked with Connexions to improve the careers programme and opportunities for work experience. It has also taken the initiative, such as working with outside bodies to provide innovative approaches to work related learning, such as Sports Enterprise and Forensic Science days. However, opportunities for vocational education learning elsewhere, such as at local colleges, have not been exploited. Plans are well under way to extend the range of accredited qualifications that are available but this development has stalled in the past because the school does not always have pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils receive a very good standard of care and live and work in safe circumstances. All the appropriate procedures for protecting and safeguarding them are in place. The school uses an approach that it describes as 'multi-disciplinary and multi-theoretical' which combines education and care to 'enable pupils to "heal" and develop, socially as well as educationally'. This approach provides a very high level of pastoral guidance and support. Very strong multi-professional working underpins the very good progress that pupils make in their social development, emotional well-being and ability to make relationships. The progress that the pupils make in these areas contributes greatly to the rate at which they are able to learn.

Procedures for guiding and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. The input of learning support staff and the special educational needs coordinator is a strong feature but the overall effectiveness of guidance and support suffers from shortcomings in assessment. While the accuracy of assessment is now improving, the school still does not share enough information with the pupils. They were unable to talk about their academic targets or what they needed to do to improve the standard of their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There have been many changes at all levels of leadership and management in the past two years. Even so, collectively these leaders have been effective in providing the school with a good, clear sense of direction and addressing the more obvious weaker features of the school's work. This has improved the quality of education, with clear benefits to pupils' personal development and achievement. Leaders have now, rightly, moved on to consider the school's long-term development. Their strategic vision identifies key performance indicators against which they will be able to take measurements of how well the school is doing. However, for this to have value leaders will need more accurate and detailed information than the current arrangements provide, as monitoring is not carried out routinely or with sufficient robustness, for example in the tracking of the progress of each pupil.

The trustees, in their role as governors, have become increasingly involved in the work of the school. For instance, they, and the school's leaders, have rationalised the school's expenditure

and so the school's resources are now deployed efficiently. This has helped to improve the effectiveness of the school, as have in-house initiatives such as the Good Teaching Programme. This programme focuses on the continuing professional development of staff and the dissemination of best practice through self-assessment and peer observation.

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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
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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 and efficiency of boarding provision	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	2
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

28 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Caldecott Foundation School, Ashford TN25 6PW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school yesterday, especially those who met with my colleague. We enjoyed the visit a great deal. Your school has improved a lot and is now satisfactory. We were impressed with many things that it does.

Lessons are good and teachers give you a good variety of things to do. You learn a lot in lessons. You told us that you like school and that is why you usually attend. You make good progress in developing as young people. You learn a lot about remaining safe and make satisfactory progress in learning about a healthy lifestyle, how you can do things for others and getting ready for leaving school.

The senior teachers are doing a good job and they want to carry on improving the school. We have given them some ideas that will help:

- The senior staff should make sure that they gather more detailed information about how well the school is doing and that every one of you is doing as well as you possibly can.
- Teachers need to assess more carefully what you have learned and make sure that you know exactly what you have to do to improve your work.
- School staff and care staff should work together more closely so that care staff can help you to develop as young people and support you with your learning.

You can help to make improvements as well. You usually behave well in lessons but sometimes one or two of you do get frustrated and fall out with classmates or refuse to work. Those of you who do this need to think carefully the next time because it is not fair if your actions stop your classmates from learning, even if only for a short time.

Thank you once again and we wish all of you lots of luck in the future.

Mike Kell Lead inspector