

Pathways Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	128190
Local Authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	293599
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Doreen McLay
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Fairless
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tennyson Avenue Grangetown Middlesbrough TS6 7NP
Telephone number	01642 779292
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Age group	7–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a school for boys and girls with above-average social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nearly all pupils come from homes experiencing considerable social and economic disadvantage. Attainment on entry is nearly always low and often very low. Nearly all pupils are White British; three are looked after by the local authority. Boys significantly outnumber girls. The school opened in September 2005 in temporary accommodation and with a temporary governing body. The newly appointed headteacher was the only permanent member of staff and the only qualified teacher. The school expanded very quickly and moved to its current site in January 2006. The original plan was to cater for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3, with Key Stage 4 pupils coming on line in due course and the possibility of including Key Stage 1 at a later date. It was anticipated that Key Stage 4 pupils would follow a work-based curriculum, being educated in other settings, but this has not materialised. Seventeen new pupils joined in September 2006, many of them in Years 10 and 11. There are currently no Key Stage 1 pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Pathways opened in haste following concerns over the provision in Redcar and Cleveland for pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Its planned expansion has been quicker than anticipated and this has created problems. Leadership and management have suffered in the process and are inadequate. There has been no formal monitoring of teaching and very little evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives. The current governing body has been in place for a year. It has greatly supported the development of the school premises but has not ensured that statutory requirements relating to the curriculum and provision of full-time education are being met. Developments in English and mathematics have been slowed as a result of the absence of key staff.

In view of the nature of pupils' difficulties progress is measured against individual targets. The primary department is developing well. Pupils here make satisfactory progress because they attend regularly and usually work with enthusiasm. Across the rest of the school, achievement is satisfactory in mathematics but not in English. Pupils are not achieving well enough for a number of reasons. Many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend very little time in class. Over half have access to below an average of two hours teaching per day, and they reject opportunities to learn in the workplace. This means that many leavers are ill-prepared for their future economic well-being. Teaching is satisfactory but pupils do not get enough of it. In Key Stage 3 and the remainder of Key Stage 4, pupils have access to less than 19 hours of teaching each week. This contributes to the curriculum for pupils being weak. Many pupils' lack of enjoyment of school is evident in a high rate of absence and poor attitudes towards work. There are many exclusions for serious misbehaviour, some of which impinges on the safety of others. In other respects, the school pays rigorous attention to pupils' health and safety and makes sure they are safeguarded and protected. Good programmes of physical activity and food studies contribute well to pupils' adopting healthy lifestyles in school, even when their lives out of school are anything but. Pupils contribute little to either the school or local communities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the time given to pupils' education and ensure that the statutory requirements for the curriculum are met.
- Create more and better opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to achieve success.
- Raise standards in English in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Monitor performance thoroughly to provide information for more accurate self-evaluation.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Even when the nature of pupils' difficulties is taken into account, pupils are not achieving enough. There is, however evidence of progress with some groups of pupils; Key Stage 2 pupils achieve satisfactorily in a good range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils do not achieve well enough. This is especially so in English, except in reading, where many pupils are making good progress. Writing is generally weak. Many pupils are reluctant to write and rarely do so to any length. Handwriting often remains immature. Only three Year 10 pupils gained Unit Awards in English last year, for completing tasks such as using a dictionary, filling in a form or writing a postcard. These same pupils are making good progress in Year 11 as they work towards GCSE. Pupils who establish a regular pattern of attendance produce satisfactory work in mathematics and science but the short school day means that many other subjects have too little time dedicated to them to allow pupils to make sufficient progress. There is good progress in food studies across the school, helped by good teaching and excellent resources and accommodation. Similarly, pupils make good progress in information and communication technology, because the subject is well taught and well resourced. Pupils also produce good examples of artwork. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys, girls or pupils cared for by the local authority.

Many Key Stage 4 pupils achieve very little. A half of Year 10 pupils are in school for only eight hours per week, and over a half of Year 11 pupils are in school for six hours per week. These times are effectively halved by absence. These pupils do not share equal opportunities with others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

The personal development and well-being of pupils are inadequate and so is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are many instances of serious misbehaviour. Forty of these have resulted in short-term exclusions since September. The rate of exclusion shows no sign of reduction. Irrational and impulsive behaviour occasionally affects the safety of others. Absence is high - more than half of it unauthorised. Three out of 11 class groups have less than 60% attendance this term and absence is slightly higher than it was last term. This points to many pupils not enjoying school. Many pupils lead very unhealthy lives out of school but in school they are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Many participate enthusiastically in games and adventure activities in physical education lessons and at break times. Pupils do not make much of an impact on the community. A school council has recently been formed but representatives find it difficult to rationalise and tend to make some silly suggestions. Improvements in pupils' reading, number and computer skills are likely to improve their future prospects but their failure to engage in work-related activities, their poor behaviour and their unreliability seriously undermine their chances of securing a brighter future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. The reason this is not matched by satisfactory achievement is because there is not enough of it and because many pupils miss too many lessons. The judgement on teaching has been made on the evidence of inspection because none has been formally monitored by senior staff or the local authority. Unqualified teachers and teaching assistants do a considerable amount of teaching. Their work contributes equally to the judgement that teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils and are sensitive to individual needs and often vary work well to meet them. However, this good response to each pupil's circumstances is inconsistent, because staff absence is very high and many lessons are

taught by supply teachers who have little chance to develop the relationships upon which successful teaching of these pupils depends. There are often as many adults in each classroom as there are pupils. This allows for a good degree of individual support but tends to foster a climate of dependency. Lesson planning is usually good and sets out clear learning expectations, which follow on logically from previous learning. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to capture the attention of pupils and speed up learning. The marking of pupils' work is variable. Some offers useful comments to help pupils to improve their work but there are other instances, particularly in English last term, where books have not been marked.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate. It does not meet statutory requirements in Key Stages 3 and 4. Beyond Year 8, religious education is not taught. Year 8 and 9 pupils are not taught a modern foreign language. Food technology is very successful, and in art pupils work with textiles but there are no specialist facilities for pupils to work with wood, metal or plastics. Music is not taught other than to primary-aged pupils. The Key Stage 4 curriculum proposes to follow a vocational path but there are no college courses and only two pupils participate in work experience or training. The school day is short. Pupils are timetabled for just 18.75 hours per week, about five hours less than is usually the case. Over a half of Key Stage 4 pupils are limited to less than eight hours each week in school. The balance was anticipated to be made up with work-based experiences but most pupils do not take these up and are offered no alternative in school. Information and communication technology and food studies are successful areas of the curriculum; they are well resourced and accommodation is good. There is little enrichment of the curriculum but successful adventure activities, part funded through the Prince's Trust, have added enjoyment and interest to the Year 9 curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Pupils who attend are satisfactorily cared for, guided and supported but because many are offered only part-time education the school cannot extend this to all pupils. Attempts to improve attendance and to prevent pupils dropping out have been largely unsuccessful. Good priority is given to making sure that the school is a place of safety. Staff follow clear guidelines to ensure that pupils are protected and safeguarded. The monitoring of pupils' progress is underdeveloped. Many pupils have only a scant awareness of their personal targets. Initiatives such as 'reading intervention' and 'toe to toe' have successfully helped pupils who have been identified as having particular problems with reading. The school experiences difficulties in enlisting the support it needs from speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and careers' advisers but enjoys the support of the Youth Offending Team and personnel from Social Care. Care, support and guidance are compromised by the very high rate of staff absence, which results in lack of continuity and the need to employ temporary staff who frequently have less understanding of pupils' needs than the people they are covering for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership, management and governance are inadequate. The school has had a difficult time over its whole existence because there has not been a sufficiently clear understanding of the

role it is expected to fulfil or the timescale within which developments are to take place. Insufficient time has been given to consolidation before expansion and diversification. This has placed an unreasonable burden on leaders and managers. These problems have been compounded by a very high level of staff absence, which the headteacher has reported to the governing body as the biggest problem facing the school this term. For the past term, staff absence has meant that the school has been without subject managers for English and mathematics, which has led to a slowing of development and achievement in these subjects. So far this term 161 teacher and teaching assistant days have been lost through absence. To cover this, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken on more teaching than they should and this has left insufficient time for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school. Governors support the school but have not ensured that statutory requirements are being 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
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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pathways Special School, Middlesbrough, TS6 7NP

I visited your school in March and would like to thank you for welcoming me and letting me look at your work.

I visit schools to see how well pupils are making progress. If you are in Years 4, 5 or 6 then I think you are making satisfactory progress but for pupils in other year groups I do not think you are doing well enough. Many of your teachers are trying hard to help you to learn. A major problem is that a lot of the time you aren't there and, when you are, some of your behaviour isn't good enough. I'm asking the school to try to make your timetable more interesting in the hope that this encourages you to attend and hopefully make school more enjoyable. I'm also asking the school to make sure that all the older pupils are given a full timetable rather than just a few hours each week.

There are some good things about your school; you seem to particularly enjoy food studies and ICT and you achieve well in these subjects. I'm told the same is true of art and PE. You need to work extra hard in English. Your reading is coming on well but in the rest of the subject a lot more effort is needed. I'm hoping staff are going to work on this to help you more.

Pupils and teachers need to work hard together to help the school improve.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector