

The Kingfisher Community Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133369
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	294082
Inspection date	19 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	99
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alderman Jacobs
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Redmond
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	Foxdenton Lane Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 9QR
Telephone number	0161 2845335
Fax number	0161 2845225

Age group	2-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school provides education for children with a wide range of special educational needs, including autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex medical conditions. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The school also works with mainstream schools throughout the borough to help them support their pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A large number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English is above the national average. Pupils have speech and language difficulties associated with their special educational needs. There are more pupils in public care than is typical nationally. The school has achieved the International Schools award, the Healthy Schools award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Eco Green Flag award and investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because the headteacher has exceptionally high expectation of the very best provision and achievement for each child. Excellent teaching ensures that each pupil learns at just the right pace and level. For example, for pupils with autism, detailed and careful attention is paid to getting enough but not too much stimulus. Furniture and resources are modified to ensure that pupils are comfortable and able to access learning. Pupils returning to school following major surgery are very quickly settled. If they will benefit from extra time in the hydrotherapy pool to help their recovery they get it. Pupils' achievement is outstanding, particularly in skills to communicate their needs independently and to better cope in their home communities. This is greatly appreciated by parents and carers, who could not speak more highly of what this school achieves for their children. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other exceptionally well. They successfully instil confidence in the staff to pioneer new methods, which benefit pupils with very complex needs. Leadership of the provision for the under-fives is excellent. Also, the school's leadership supports very effectively other mainstream schools across the borough in serving pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This work in other schools enables pupils with autism to be successfully taught alongside their mainstream peers.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. They have a meaningful say in how their school is run. Pupils are equipped to cope in the community and so parents and carers, for example, can take them out for a meal or to the cinema knowing they will behave well and enjoy the experience. Healthy eating and fitness for all pupils, whatever their disability, lies at the heart of this school. The curriculum is shaped according to the needs of the pupils; this is a strikingly effective aspect of this school. It moves pupils on in the most important skills needed, yet is rich and balanced. Outstanding use is made of the school's grounds to bring learning alive and make it meaningful for the pupils. Care, guidance and support are excellent. Parents and carers say: 'It is a wonderful school. The staff are enthusiastic and know each child and their individual needs perfectly. Nothing is too much trouble and communication between home and school is excellent.' Improvement since the last inspection and capacity for further improvement are excellent. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. Achievement is excellent, but standards are well below the national average because of pupils' complex special educational needs. Progress in communication is very impressive: for example, pupils with the most complex needs develop a fixed eye gaze in response to an interesting object, such as a round ball. Other pupils progress from using one picture to make their needs known to using a string of pictures to convey what they want to say in greater depth. With support, pupils begin to make and communicate real choices independently. Some high achievers communicate very effectively using words, while others confidently use their electronic aids to talk. Gains in reading from using pictures to reading simple text are very good. Very good analysis of assessment data has shown pupils do better in practical mathematics than in applying

mathematical concepts. This has resulted in a strategy to raise pupils' skills in application of mathematics, and already standards are rising in this skill. In science all pupils explore objects with enjoyment. Pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their very specific targets on their individual education plans, such as being able to better tolerate messy substances, take turns; and cope with established routines. Gains in life skills are excellent, particularly for children under five. Achievement in performance arts is outstanding and gives pupils confidence to express themselves in imaginative ways.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school and have an exceptionally positive attitude to learning. Those about to move on to secondary school say 'We don't want to leave because we are so happy.' Behaviour is good throughout the school. The exciting use of a stimulating outdoor environment for learning significantly benefits pupils with very challenging behaviour associated with their learning difficulties. Attendance is good. Quality care programmes ensure that pupils are very effectively equipped to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle. Equipping children with skills to better cope in their home communities lies at the heart of this exceptionally successful school. The strong voice of the pupils is listened to and acted upon. For example, children have contributed to improved dignity surrounding toileting programmes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Outdoor acts of worship in the school's woods are used very effectively to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. Links with schools overseas contribute very well to promoting pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Overall teaching and learning are outstanding throughout the school. Suitable learning environments have been created in classrooms tailored to pupils' specific learning difficulties. Classrooms for pupils with autism are organised to ensure that they receive sufficient stimulus, but not too much. This removes potential distractions and so improves their learning. Sensory environments and areas designed for social stories benefit pupils with the most complex needs. In lessons, each child's learning is matched exactly to his or her skill needs; thus lesson by lesson pupils make small but very important steps of progress. Those pupils in regression because of their medical needs are included very effectively in learning experiences. Teachers know pupils' interests, and make use of them when planning activities to enhance their learning. Resources are modified to minimise or remove barriers, such as to meet the needs of pupils with severe visual impairment. Recent investment in large plasma screens, has benefited a large number of pupils because they can access learning without the need to use the screens switches: the screens' safe design means children can touch them with their hands. Teaching assistants work very effectively with teachers to ensure that pupils are kept stimulated and on task in their learning at all times.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Innovative and flexibly planned, the curriculum meets all pupils' needs. It successfully develops the skills they require to cope in the outside world, yet ensures that requirements of the National

Curriculum and for religious education are met. For children under five the curriculum is outstanding, and the focus on learning through play has been successfully incorporated into the programmes for pupils in Year 1. A striking feature is what the school calls 'the thinking curriculum for pupils with autism'. It is shaped around what parents and carers share with the school about the interests their children have and what motivates them to learn. Therapy is integral to the curriculum: it improves pupils' behaviour and enhances their independent mobility. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is outstanding. Visitors and visits contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment and fun in learning. The range of lunchtime clubs, including outdoor clubs, is excellent. These clubs develop pupils' skills exceptionally well and are greatly appreciated by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Education and health professionals work very effectively to ensure that pupils' individual barriers to learning are removed. For example, good positioning and adapted furniture and feeding utensils give pupils as much independence and dignity in feeding as possible. Switches are modified so that pupils can use them independently to communicate meaningful choices. Risk assessments, including of challenging behaviours, are thorough and detailed. As appropriate, children have excellent care plans to meet complex medical needs. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils say that they feel very safe at school. Parents and carers are delighted with the care, guidance and support their children receive. They say: 'The level of care and support from all involved in the education and welfare of our children is second to none.' Induction and transition arrangements are outstanding. Pupils are appropriately involved in their annual reviews. Tracking of pupils' progress is very effective. Data about how well pupils are progressing is used exceptionally well to plan to raise their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management flow from an extremely effective working partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. They have put a structure in place which means that all members of the senior leadership team are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and focus continually on new ways to improve what they do for the benefit of the pupils. Together they have created a stimulating learning environment and a dynamic curriculum which enables pupils to gain the skills they need to be confident in living in their communities. There is a shared vision among all staff, and subject leaders work very hard to make their subjects relevant and beneficial to pupils' needs. Training of staff in other schools in the techniques and skills required to manage pupils with challenging behaviour and complex needs is an outstanding feature: thus increasing numbers of children are being successfully included in mainstream schools. There are very good systems in place to check how well the school is doing. Information from monitoring and evaluation is used to shape clear and sharp priorities to improve pupils' achievement. Governance is very supportive and effective.

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Annex A

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of The Kingfisher Community Special School, Oldham, OL9 9QR

I greatly enjoyed visiting your school. It was lovely to talk with a group of you. You spoke confidently with me using your electronic aids, signing, picture books with symbols and lovely words to describe your school. All of you made it very clear to me that you enjoy school.

I think your school is excellent - a great place for you to learn. Your school grounds are beautiful and give you many opportunities to learn outside. You achieve very well and are equipped to live as independently as possible at home. Your achievement in talking and doing important things by yourselves is outstanding. You are exceptionally well taught and given fun activities which challenge you. Your behaviour is good and you certainly have an important say in how your school is run. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that the care and support you receive is excellent. You clearly love being at school and take great pride in your work.

I wish you and all of your teachers all the best for the future.