

Eslington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133397
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	294086
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Mel Blackband

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	6–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Kennedy
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Richards (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002
School address	Hazel Road Gateshead Tyne And Wear NE8 2EP
Telephone number	0191 4785198
Fax number	0191 4787621

Age group	6-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Eslington Primary Special School provides for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Over half of the pupils have further learning difficulties but a minority of pupils have been identified as gifted or talented. The pupils are almost exclusively from a White British background. There are presently three girls at the school. Almost three-quarters of pupils are entitled to a free school meal, which is higher than in most schools of this kind. The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils' personal development is outstanding. Because of their social and behavioural problems, often resulting in exclusion from previous schools, the standards attained by pupils at the time of their entry to the school are below average. All pupils, however, achieve well and a few make outstanding progress. The pupils love coming to school and parents are happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe, that they enjoy their lessons and that the school has high expectations of their progress. One parent commented, 'My child is coming on much better...because of the calm and organised atmosphere.'

All the pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. This underpins the pupils' continuing motivation to learn and their good achievement. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The teachers ensure that their lessons are interesting, well paced and challenging. As a result, the pupils thoroughly enjoy their work and respond by trying their best. The school's knowledge of each pupil is excellent, but there is some inconsistency in the use of target systems which are not currently effective enough in allowing pupils to gain an understanding of their own progress. As a result, pupils are sometimes unsure how to improve their work. The curriculum is effective and well managed by subject leaders. It is enriched by the imaginative use of educational visits to extend the pupils' social and cultural understanding.

The pupils thrive within the caring and supportive ethos of the school. Children with continuing behaviour problems or personal difficulties are very quickly identified and supported. The learning mentors very effectively maintain good links between parents and teachers. A strong emphasis is placed on personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE) and on specific techniques which help the pupils to understand their own behaviour. This promotes the pupils' emotional and behavioural development and they learn to remain healthy, to keep safe and to behave well. The pupils are involved wherever possible in decisions about themselves. The provision for pupils with additional learning difficulties is good. These pupils are well supported and follow specifically adapted programmes where this is appropriate. The pupils value their school. This is evident through the exceptional relationships they have with staff, their good attendance and the way they proudly wear their uniform. This provision, along with pupils' good progress in learning and using basic skills, prepares them well for their future learning.

All this occurs because of good leadership and management. The acting headteacher has been inspirational in developing the school's effectiveness, particularly in ensuring that staff work as a close-knit team and share a common vision for the school. A dedicated and experienced management team supports her well. The school evaluates its work accurately. It seeks and acts on the views of all connected with the school, including the pupils. The governing body is supportive and keeps a close eye on the school's performance. Good improvement has occurred since the previous inspection and given the current circumstances within the school, it has a good capacity to improve in future. It gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by setting suitably challenging learning targets which give clear guidance about how pupils can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' standards when they join the school are generally below those typical for their age. Many have large gaps in their knowledge and understanding. All the pupils achieve well, however, and some make outstanding progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average overall. More able pupils do particularly well and as well as other pupils in mainstream schools. Pupils with additional learning difficulties achieve equally well and there is no evidence of underachievement. The tracking of pupils' progress in basic skills is excellent and this has a significant impact on their achievement. All the pupils make good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The pupils make particularly good progress in meeting challenging behavioural targets. They learn to take a pride in their improved behaviour after a history of school failure and rejection. This has a crucial impact on their academic success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong management of behaviour and emphasis on moral and social values. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding, as demonstrated, for instance, in their thoughtful and sensitive responses to an assembly on friendship. Their social development is exemplary and a major strength of the school. The pupils are delightful in their openness and friendliness to staff and other pupils. Pupils respond very well to the rewards and praise they are given. As a result, they work harder, behave better, and therefore make good progress.

The school is calm because pupils feel safe and confident and know what is expected from them. When pupils' behaviour becomes unacceptable it is dealt with calmly and with understanding and support for the pupil involved. As one boy put it, 'I still kick off, but not a lot now.' Pupils were emphatic that bullying was rare and dealt with quickly. Parents generally have a high regard for the way the school manages behaviour. A typical comment is, 'His behaviour has improved enormously and he has been provided with many coping strategies.'

Pupils develop their understanding of their behaviour and responsibilities to others through very good PSHCE. This is supported by the efforts pupils make to help others; for example, charity fund raising for 'Red Nose Day'. They gain an excellent knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy. Many take advantage of the good opportunities to take part in physical activity during the day and at lunchtimes. Pupils develop their social skills because of the excellent example they are set by staff. Attendance is good and there has been a steady improvement over several years. This is because pupils enjoy school and are proud of their progress. This significant improvement in pupils' social skills along with the good grounding in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy ensures that they are well prepared for transfer to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know their pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well-paced lessons. The pupils like their teachers. Pupils gain confidence to learn new things because they receive a high level of individual tuition from well-trained teaching assistants. Due to excellent

management of behaviour pupils' understand and respond to clear routines. Support staff play a full part in assessing and recording the steps in pupils' progress. The assessment is, however, not used as consistently as it might be to sharpen pupils' learning targets and involve them in understanding what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy a curriculum which is well matched to their interests and which is rigorously monitored for its effectiveness. Programmes in PHSCE underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the pupils' excellent levels of personal development. There is a range of well-planned activities that help pupils to learn in everyday situations, for example, teaching them to behave appropriately in the community. Imaginative schemes are being developed to help pupils learn how to make independent choices. Good use is made of the national strategies programmes of literacy and numeracy which add rigour to lessons and has a positive impact on the pupils' progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a high standard of care for pupils. Child protection procedures are effective. There are appropriate procedures for risk assessments and the necessary checks on adults are in place. The staff record every incident of challenging behaviour in great detail, particularly where accepted restraint procedures have been used. These records not only describe the incident but show how the pupils themselves have been involved in reflecting on their behaviour during the incident. This has a strong effect on their ability to exercise self-control.

Relationships between school and parents are very good. This is exemplified by the outstanding work of the learning mentors who liaise very effectively between home and school. Pupils have a good understanding of their behaviour targets because staff tell them how well they are doing and reward them with merits. However, pupils are less secure in their knowledge of their learning targets. Staff know each pupil very well but assessment systems tend to be rather inefficient in highlighting the achievement of different groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. The acting headteacher has had a very positive influence on the school's good improvement since the previous inspection. She has been supported by a strong senior team. Managers have a good grasp of the school's strengths and where there needs to be improvement. They are aware, for instance, that the school could make better use of targets to raise standards further. Communication within the school is excellent. Staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. There are excellent procedures to recruit and support new teachers. Professional training is relevant to all staff; for example, in the whole school training on behaviour management.

Governors are constructive in their support for the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Relationships with parents are good and the communication between home and school is very well organised.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

16 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eslington School, Gateshead, NE8 2EP.

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom and in the dining room. Thank you and well done!

I was only with you for one day which was long enough for me to realise that you go to a good school. I could see that you all enjoy school and that your behaviour has improved rapidly.

These are the main strengths of the school:

- you work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your behaviour and personal development
- you have a good range of activities, including those that help you become independent, make choices, and prepare you for when you go on to secondary school
- all the adults at the school look after you very well
- lessons are interesting and you are well taught; this means you enjoy learning and do your best
- your school is well run.

I think the school could improve further if the staff worked with you to give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.

You can help yourselves too, by making sure your behaviour is always good and you continue to try as hard as you are doing in lessons. Please thank your parents for the comments they made on the questionnaires which showed most like the school and the way it helps you all to learn and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector