

Ernest Cookson School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104744
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308661
Inspection date	13 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

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	7–14
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Smith
Headteacher	Mr S Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2005
School address	Mill Lane West Derby Liverpool Merseyside L12 7JA
Telephone number	0151 220 1874
Fax number	0151 252 1238

Age group	7–14
Inspection date	13 January 2009
Inspection number	308661

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is for boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who come from across the city of Liverpool. Many of them have had negative and interrupted experiences of education and a significant number had poor attendance at their previous schools. Over 80% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The majority of pupils (86%) are from White British backgrounds. The school currently has a small number of looked after children. A small number of students in Key Stage 3 are educated off-site, where they follow basic key skills and vocational courses. All pupils have a statement of special educational need or are undergoing statutory assessment. The school is due to be relocated on to the site of a mainstream school in 2010 as a part of the building schools for the future project. The school has achieved the following awards: Quality Mark Basic Skills (primary and secondary awards), Healthy Schools Award, Sports Activemark, and Dyslexia Friendly School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ernest Cookson School provides a good education for its pupils. When pupils join the school, their standards are very low compared with the national average for pupils of their age. During their time in school, pupils make good progress because of the mostly good, and sometimes outstanding teaching and also because the curriculum is well matched to their diverse needs. This ensures that most pupils reach their challenging targets and achieve in line with their capabilities. The progress made by a minority of pupils is, however, restricted by their poor attendance.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Parents say that their children gain in confidence and self-esteem and that their behaviour and attitudes improve during their time in the school. Throughout the school, teaching is good with some lessons that are outstanding. At every key stage, the curriculum places significant emphasis on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence and there are regular opportunities to recognise and celebrate pupils' successes. A strong feature of the curriculum is the partnerships with local schools and alternative education providers to ensure that all pupils have a curriculum suitable for their needs. Care, guidance and support are good with well organised care in place at all levels of the school, enabling all pupils to feel safe and well looked after. Pupils' individual progress in all subjects is well tracked. However, this system is not yet effective enough to identify trends in the progress of some groups of pupils.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Analysis of the school's work is excellent. It is systematic and provides a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The governing body is undergoing some changes to its committee structure, in order to provide increased support and challenge for the headteacher.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the best examples of outstanding teaching are used to improve the quality of teaching in the school.
- Develop the school's data systems to analyse more effectively the performance of the school, particularly the progress of groups of pupils such as those with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in local authority care.
- Improve attendance especially amongst persistent non-attenders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards attained by pupils are well below average, their literacy skills are particularly weak. Pupils are assessed thoroughly on entry to school and their progress is then measured three times a year. This information, supported by inspection evidence, indicates that overall, most pupils make good progress and a significant minority of pupils make outstanding progress.

At Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. In science, progress is often outstanding. At Key Stage 3 progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) is also good. A minority of students do, however, make outstanding progress in English as a result of recent effective development work undertaken by the school. At the start of Year 7, science standards are higher than for English and mathematics but progress at Key Stage 3 in science could not be clearly seen

because the assessment procedures were used inconsistently. ICT has benefited from recent investment in resources and good progress is now seen.

School performance information shows that there is no significant variation in the progress of pupils from different groups, although this view is restricted as the school's data analysis is not yet effectively tracking all groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very welcoming and proud of their school. Behaviour is good and the number of reported incidents is reducing due to the positive way that behaviour is managed by all staff. Pupils also show an increasing ability to manage their own behaviour, by the use of 'time-outs', the learning support room and the quiet room. From the start of their time in school, pupils learn to get on well with one another and are encouraged to think about their actions and behaviour and the effect it has on others. Pupils take part enthusiastically in their lessons. They are proud of what they achieve and of their successes. They feel safe at school and they say that when bullying happens it is dealt with effectively by staff. Improved attendance and pupils' comments reflect that they enjoy school. However, there are a few poor attenders, who, despite the school's strenuous efforts, do not attend as much as they could.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. They respect the customs and religious beliefs of others. They are keen to contribute to the community of the school and they respect their surroundings. Pupils are very well informed about healthy lifestyles, taking advantage of the many opportunities provided by the school to participate in sport and physical activities. They have been proactive in improving the quality of food at lunch-time, showing that they are adopting healthy lifestyles effectively. Pupils become increasingly confident and those who have been in the school the longest time show the most improvement in attitudes from when they started. They are sure that their views about how the school can be improved are listened to.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with some lessons that are outstanding. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects. They understand the learning needs of their pupils. Lessons are well planned with a sufficient level of challenge to help pupils improve. Assessment of pupils' performance, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT is thorough and is used well to set targets for improvement and to provide additional support if necessary. This support is often provided by a learning mentor who provides one to one time with the pupils to enable them to catch up. Pupils are given clear guidance about what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons there is pace and challenge and the teaching is vibrant and dynamic. Pupils feel safe, secure and increasingly confident in their learning. This is due to tasks and activities being well matched to their abilities and interests. Independent and group learning is encouraged, so that pupils gain confidence in their own abilities and in working with others. Pupils' behaviour is well managed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and meets the needs of all learners. Older students have a curriculum which provides them with opportunities to attend local 'alternative education providers' as an enhancement to the school based curriculum. This provides opportunities for vocational learning and the school ensures that these placements are appropriate and of a good quality. There are very good links with local schools, such as the local specialist arts college, and this adds suitable variety, breadth and relevance to the curriculum.

Indeed, opportunities to attend other schools are regularly provided in line with the school's aim that pupils should gain mainstream experience when appropriate. Visits to the wider community, including a wide range of educational visits and opportunities for residential stays, for example, on a barge, are an important part of school life. The school provides further opportunities to take part in activities such as rock climbing and cycling. These activities give pupils opportunities to gain confidence in situations different from their everyday lives. There are plenty of visitors to the school from the local community, including theatre companies and the police and fire services.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a supportive and caring environment. It provides a range of expert support needed to develop the social and emotional skills of its pupils, so that they can progress well. There are clear and up-to-date policies and procedures in place to promote child protection, which are understood by all staff. Risk assessments are carefully attended to. Pupils are aware of their own challenging targets for their subjects and their behaviour. Teachers, and the learning mentor, keep parents informed about how well their children are getting on in their work and how they can improve. Marking and feedback to pupils is good although there are inconsistencies between subjects. At its best, feedback provides a comment about work done and a suggestion for how to continue to improve in their work. The school works effectively with other relevant agencies to marshal support for those who need it. In Year 9, students are given initial opportunities to explore their future options, with the school's connexions advisor.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported well by his deputy headteacher, is leading the school well. Senior staff are committed, energetic and work well as a team. The recently appointed literacy coordinator, who is a member of the senior leadership team, has already had a major impact on progress in his area. There is an excellent vision and clear strategic direction, set by the headteacher, which is supported by the whole staff. Like their children, parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school. Their views in the Ofsted parental questionnaires and in the school's own surveys are unanimously positive.

Lesson observations are undertaken and feedback is given to teachers. The school's self-evaluation is extremely accurate and, as a result, the development plan has been informed by a thorough knowledge of the school's practice and analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The school is very inclusive and ensures that equal opportunities are given to pupils. The

headteacher is working to ensure a smooth transition to the new site planned for 2010 and to maintain the current ethos of the school through this time. The governors have high expectations for the school. Nevertheless, they are in a period of restructuring and are establishing new committees so that they can challenge and support the headteacher more effectively in his work. These are not yet well enough established to have had an impact on the work of the school. This is an improving school which knows itself well, the capacity for further improvement is good. Due to the extensive opportunities for pupils to gain experiences of other communities, both within and outside the curriculum, that they would not normally experience, the school has been judged good for community cohesion.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for welcoming me when I inspected your school recently. I was very pleased to hear your views about the school and to see you at work.

You told me that you are happy in your school. I found it to be a good school. It is well led by the headteacher. He knows what steps to take to improve your school. Your teachers and other staff enjoy teaching you and they are working hard to make sure that you learn as much as you can. Teachers know how well you are working in each subject and they set you targets to help you improve your work and your behaviour. Your behaviour is generally good and I was pleased to see how much you enjoy school and that your attendance is getting better. You know about how to be healthy and I was pleased to see that you have successfully asked for more healthy food for lunch. Your parents are also very happy with how the school works with you.

I have asked the school to improve in three areas, so that you can be more successful in school.

- Use the outstanding teaching that there is in the school to help all teachers improve their teaching.
- Make sure that the school knows how well you are doing and then uses that information to make sure that all groups of pupils, such as those of you from different ethnic backgrounds and those of you with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are learning as much as you can.
- Increase levels of attendance so that you can learn more in your time in Ernest Cookson School

You can help with this by using the school council to let the headteacher know of your views.

I wish you all the best of success in the future and I thank you again for your warm welcome.