

Silverdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133432
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	316121
Inspection date	25 March 2008
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	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Mitchell
Headteacher	Mr Brian Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
School address	Langdale Gardens Howdon Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 0HG
Telephone number	0191 2005982
Fax number	0191 2006710

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Silverdale is a school for pupils with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils are also diagnosed with significant mental health problems and 60% take regular medication to help control their behaviour. Over a half are eligible for free school meals. No girls have ever been admitted to school. Over a quarter of pupils are looked after by the local authority. Primary age pupils form a small minority. All pupils are White British.

The inspection took place the day after the long Easter weekend. This should be taken into account, as many pupils find such breaks to their normal routines unsettling.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but it is very variable, with some making good progress whilst others do not make enough. This is partly because teaching is similarly variable but also because a few pupils are reluctant to take the medication they need to help them concentrate and behave. The nature of pupils' difficulties means that they cannot reach national expectations in the standards they attain but their achievements mean that most of them are satisfactorily placed for a brighter future than was anticipated on admission.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has provided good leadership over recent years. This has contributed to many improvements being made. The pace of improvement slowed over the past year during periods of his unavoidable absence because management systems across the school are not yet robust enough. In the main, standards have been maintained in the face of the pupil population becoming ever more complex and severe in its degree of disturbance and learning difficulty. These increasing needs have tested staff and a few have not adapted sufficiently to change, with the result that teaching has dipped from good to satisfactory. Managers are aware of this. They know where strengths and weaknesses exist and have taken action to remedy the situation. This gives the school a satisfactory capacity for improvement. Most teachers are managing extreme pupil behaviour well, often through the development of good, supportive relationships with pupils, but also by making sure that pupils are set work that matches their ability and interests them. Those pupils who stay in classrooms often receive good support, which helps them to learn and behave well in lessons. A small minority of pupils attempt to leave the premises during school time. This distances them from the clear systems that are in place to support and care for them. In this respect, pupils demonstrate insufficient understanding of the need to keep themselves safe. Most of these are pupils who also run away from home or care placements on a frequent basis. It is not a reflection of dissatisfaction with school. Most pupils, their parents and carers are on record as saying that they enjoy school. Physical education (PE) is popular. It contributes well to helping pupils to lead healthier lives and does a lot to help counter unhealthy habits.

In the context of the school, behaviour is satisfactory. There are serious incidents on record but these usually reflect the, already identified, impulsive and irrational nature of pupils' extreme difficulties. These are usually at their height on admission to the school. Most pupils' behaviour improves over their stay at school in response to the skills of staff and the wide range of support systems and therapies that are in place. It is significant that a rapid increase in pupil numbers over the past two years has resulted in a greater than usual proportion of pupils being relatively new to the school. Most pupils behaved well during the inspection, the exception being those of primary age whose misbehaviour was not well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Eliminate the problem of absconding pupils.
- Address the issue of primary-age pupils' misbehaviour.
- Develop more robust systems of leadership and management to ensure that continuing improvement does not over-rely on the headteacher.
- Raise the standard of teaching and learning by providing more support and training for those staff identified as needing it.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities prevents them from being able to meet national expectations. Nearly all pupils join the school with exceptionally low standards and are frequently unready and unwilling to be taught. The first sign of progress is usually pupils' willingness to attend lessons. During the inspection, most pupils were seen to be making satisfactory progress in lessons. They worked hard and behaved well. Most pupils regularly meet personal targets set, with the agreement of parents and carers, after discussion with pupils. These targets are increasingly well informed by the growing accuracy of assessment of pupils' progress.

In English, progress is best in pupils' development of speaking and listening skills. This is of huge significance in that it enables pupils to resolve their difficulties through discussion rather than through inappropriate action. Many pupils remain reluctant readers but their writing improves satisfactorily. In mathematics, the best and most relevant progress is seen in pupils' growing understanding of how to use what they already know in real-life situations.

By the time they leave, nearly all pupils have been awarded certificates issued by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) to reflect their achievements in numeracy, literacy, sport, art and, often, several other areas of learning. This reflects their satisfactory achievement. Not enough pupils, however, make the step up to a higher level of accreditation, such as Entry Level Qualification, often because they do not commit sufficiently to longer, more rigorous courses.

There is no evidence to suggest that any group of pupils achieves differently to any other but there is clear evidence that frequent absence is significantly affecting the progress of a small minority of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory. It generally improves over the time pupils remain at the school. Most misbehaviour is entirely typical of that anticipated by schools such as this. It can be extreme and prolonged or mild and short-lived, but in each instance it is generally well managed to keep disruption to a minimum, allowing other pupils to keep on learning and feel unthreatened. Attendance is satisfactory. Many pupils are enthusiastic participants in a wide range of sporting activities, including extremely well taught PE lessons. In other respects, pupils are less committed to living healthily but the school works tirelessly to encourage them to give up smoking and other bad habits. Staff listen attentively to pupils' views. Pupils are in no doubt that they have a say in how the school is run and what can be done to improve school life. There are occasional opportunities for pupils to help out in a local care home or to entertain parents and local people in the eagerly anticipated annual 'Showcase Spectacular'. The growing propensity of a few pupils to run away from school, often just 'for the buzz of it', demonstrates their lack of awareness of personal safety. Clear procedures are in place to minimise risk on such occasions but whilst out of school these pupils are beyond the much needed care of adults. Most pupils leave school having

developed well enough to be accepted by colleges or training providers where they can continue to strive for better futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is variance in the quality. Some teaching, such as in PE, is outstanding but at other times, as seen in the primary department during the inspection, a little is inadequate. This picture is very similar to that recorded by managers in their observation of lessons. The difference between stronger and weaker teaching usually comes down to confidence. Stronger teaching is characterised by those teachers who assert their presence immediately and give a clear message to pupils of what will be expected of them and what they will learn as a result. Weaker teaching is often characterised by allowing pupils to dictate terms. In the main, teachers understand pupils' needs well. They have a clear idea of what pupils can realistically achieve and they plan lessons carefully to ensure that each pupil has a realistic chance of success if he works hard. Most teachers show a good degree of expertise in the way they manage errant behaviour. They deploy support staff well, ensuring that classroom assistants are involved in helping pupils to learn, as well as to behave properly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It broadly meets statutory requirements but a modern foreign language is only intermittently taught and design technology is a weak area of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This is mainly due to concerns about pupils' safety in the design technology suite. To some extent, this is remedied by good access to 'The Barn', an off-site facility where pupils learn advanced joinery skills and enjoy considerable success. Managers have identified information and communication technology (ICT) as a weaker area of the curriculum and improvements in staffing and resources are imminent. The curriculum focuses well on the most important aspects of English and mathematics for its pupils and this is reflected in their progress in these areas. The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes good opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work. A good range of activities outside of the classroom is provided. These add considerably to pupils' enjoyment of school and contribute significantly to their personal development and academic learning. The range and level at which pupils can prove their progress by gaining nationally recognised accreditation is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils are well safeguarded whilst on the school premises. Parents and carers express great confidence in the care their children receive. Pitted against this, is the problem of pupils putting themselves at risk by removing themselves from the school's caring and supportive environment. A strength of the care the school takes of its pupils is the work of link personnel, who work diligently to pull together the actions of the many professionals involved in pupils' complicated lives and make sense of them to parents and pupils alike. Older pupils are being given good opportunities to demonstrate their worthiness for employment and are being well advised about their options on leaving school. Assessment procedures are becoming increasingly effectively embedded and, after an

erratic start, are becoming more useful in determining the degree of academic guidance and support that pupils need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership but his unavoidable absence for several periods over the past year has exposed fragilities in the depth of leadership qualities and the robustness of management systems across the school. This has resulted in the hitherto good rate of improvement slowing down. Governors are supportive but rely too heavily on the headteacher for information about the school and for taking action to remedy weaknesses. Systems to support greater sharing of leadership and management are currently being put in place and are developing well as key personnel grow in confidence. A good multi-disciplinary team has been built up. It works well with pupils, families and many other partner organisations. The budget has been stabilised and a large deficit transformed into a surplus. Many, good training opportunities have been provided to help staff become more effective in their work but the rapidly changing nature of pupils' needs means that the need for ever more specialised training is ongoing.

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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?	3
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	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
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	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Silverdale School, North Tyneside, NE28 0HG

I visited your school today to see how you were getting on. It was good to see most of you working hard but disappointing to see a few of you ignoring staff who were trying to help you. Nevertheless, I feel that Silverdale is a satisfactory school.

I know that most of you haven't enjoyed other schools much in the past so it was good to see photos of you at Silverdale, obviously enjoying yourselves on trips and whilst playing games. Most of you attend well but a few of you need to make a bit more effort to get to school. At the moment you are making satisfactory progress. It would not take much for you to do even better. That's what I am hoping for, so here are some suggestions.

Once you are in school, stay there, don't be tempted to leave school during the day, it stops you learning, puts you at risk and wastes a lot of precious time. Try a bit harder to behave well particularly the youngest pupils amongst you. Talk to your teachers about the help you need. That way you can help them to keep finding out about different ways of helping you to make faster progress.

I have asked your school to involve more staff in making improvements so that you can do your best and learn plenty in all your lessons.

All the best and good luck for the future!

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector