

Maplewell Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120348
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327256
Inspection date	11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Goodchild

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Carole Brailsford

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	136
Sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derrick Miles
Headteacher	Sue Tindal
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
School address	Woodhouse Eaves Loughborough LE12 8QY
Telephone number	01509 890237
Fax number	01509 891197

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school provides for students with moderate learning difficulties and some with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). At the time of the previous inspection, there were students being placed with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Disorder (BESD), but this is no longer the case, though a few remain in Years 10 and 11. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. Students in the sixth form all have ASD. The school has a residential provision but currently no students have this written into their statement of special need.

All students have the opportunity to experience the residential provision. All residential accommodation is in the main building of the school and is organised on two floors with boys' accommodation on the first floor and girls' accommodation on the second floor. Each area has a TV lounge and, in addition, there is a pool table, a computer room and an arts and crafts area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Maplewell Hall is a good school. It has some outstanding features. It has improved since the previous inspection in most areas of its work and its capacity to continue to improve is good. Key issues identified then have been effectively addressed and there is good evidence that this improving trend is continuing. Effective leadership and management have been instrumental in bringing this about. Strong features of the school are the values it promotes, its friendly atmosphere and its welcome for students from a range of backgrounds. Students feel safe and secure and enjoy coming to school. The school provides good care, support and guidance. The commitment to the pastoral care of students is outstanding. The school is proactive in identifying potential problems early and has effective systems in place to provide the support and guidance that students need. This benefits both the progress they make in their learning and their personal development.

The recently introduced parents' workshops have been successful in providing support to families in behaviour management. The school works hard to ensure good attendance and offers support to families who are experiencing difficulties. The curriculum is good and contributes effectively towards the good progress that students make and to their good personal development and well-being. Opportunities for the development of life skills, and to attend college, are particularly good in Years 10 and 11 but less well developed in Years 7 to 9. Links with mainstream schools are not well established and this restricts opportunities for students to integrate with their peers and feel confident about attending GCSE courses for more able students that are not provided by the school. Students lack confidence as some had unhappy experiences of mainstream education. In relation to their various starting points, the progress that students make during their time at school is good. Standards are below the national average. The 2008 unvalidated results from national tests at the end of Year 9 in mathematics and science show a continuing upward trend with more students entered and an increase in the number of students achieving Levels 3 and 4. There was a similar increase at the end of Year 11 in the number of students entered for external examinations and achieving Entry Level qualifications and a grade in four subjects at GCSE.

The standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and evidence from this inspection supports the school's judgement that it is now good overall with some outstanding practice. The increasingly effective use of assessment information to inform lesson planning has made a significant contribution to this improvement, together with the regular cycle of monitoring and support. The school evaluates itself well and has recognised the need for more specialist English teaching in Years 7 to 9. The uneven progress of girls and boys has also rightly been identified as an area for development. A start has been made by introducing a topic-based approach to work to engage boys more effectively but too little has been done to ensure more consistent progress in all subjects for all students.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students make good progress in their personal development because of the many opportunities they are given to help them gain experiences of adult life. Students are sensitively presented with situations that challenge the difficulties which autism presents, thus enabling them to make sense of what may, at times, seem a confusing world. They are encouraged to take as many opportunities as possible to make their own choices and to seek independence, for

example, by learning how to use public transport and manage a budget with confidence. The staff effectively promote an adult ethos and mature behaviour. The school has developed good links with local colleges and all students gain accreditations in technical and vocational subjects, appropriate to their starting point, by the time they leave school. They follow an English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and life-skills curriculum in school. Due to staff absence, it was not possible to assess the quality of teaching during the inspection. Some students have successfully gained a GCSE qualification that has enabled them to go onto a higher level course at college. The leadership and management of the provision are good.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

The quality of boarding is satisfactory and the school meets most of the key National Minimum Standards. Judgements have been made for each individual outcome area as follows. Staying Safe is judged as satisfactory, Making a Positive Contribution, Enjoying Economic Well-being and Organisation are judged as good, and Being Healthy and Enjoying and Achieving are judged as outstanding.

There were six recommendations set at the last inspection and action has been taken to ensure that these are now met. There has been progress on recruitment records, and documenting staff training and student questionnaire results. The security of the building is improved and now meets the standards, and risk assessments for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health have now been updated.

Students' health care needs are met very well because staff are knowledgeable and motivated to ensure the provision for health care is good. Students' individual health and intimate care needs are safely managed and, where these needs are complex, staff are particularly good at ensuring that the procedures in place work well. This in turn ensures the safety and welfare of those students concerned. Health information is recorded and available to staff, and there are procedures to keep staff informed about regular changes for individual students. There is good liaison between the staff, parents and other health care professionals, to ensure that all areas are identified and that needs are met as far as possible.

The students enjoy a healthy and varied diet, and are very involved in the choice of food that they receive. Individual needs are very well catered for and sensitively handled so that no young person is singled out as being different. Mealtimes are a well ordered, social occasion and, as a result, mealtimes are enjoyed by the students.

The school has policies and procedures in place on the administration and storage of medication, which are used consistently in practice. The school uses homely remedies which have been agreed with a doctor, and all prescribed medicines are only accepted into the school where the prescription instructions are clear. As a consequence, the staff can be sure that the correct dose is always given. Students' welfare is further promoted through staff training in a number of health-related areas, including first aid and epilepsy.

Students are pleased with how their privacy and dignity are respected, and report that the staff help them to respect each other's privacy. Students' welfare is promoted because they are clear about how to make a complaint. Students have very good relationships with the staff and feel able to approach them with concerns. As a result, most issues are resolved before they become complaints. Students are very confident that staff deal with their views and concerns, and they know about the complaints procedure. There is no documentary evidence that suggests that the parents have the relevant information to enable them to contact Ofsted directly should

they have a complaint. However, the students' guide to the school does contain the relevant information. The students are clear about the school's stance on bullying and know that the responses of staff will be prompt and consistently applied. Each student is seen by staff as an individual and the promotion of equality and diversity in the school is good.

There are clear procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns in the school. There are links with the Local Safeguarding Board, but the policy and guidance still refers to the Area Child Protection Committee and staff also refer to the Area Child Protection Committee rather than the Local Safeguarding Board. Staff at all levels are trained and have a good working knowledge of how they should respond if there is a safeguarding issue. They are also very aware of the vulnerability of disabled children. As a result, children are as safe as possible and the students say they feel safe in the school.

Students are assisted by staff to develop socially acceptable behaviour and each have their own goals and targets in relation to their behaviour. The staff are very clear about their approach to the students, which is positive and based on reward and achievement. This works very well in the school and the staff are good at providing a consistent approach and setting clear boundaries which are firm but fair. As a result, students know what is expected of them. The staff are all trained in de-escalation techniques, and it is very evident that any physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is a book to record instances of physical intervention but the book does not fully comply with the National Minimum Standards. This is because the pages are not numbered, the book is not bound, and the effectiveness and consequence are not documented.

The building provides a homely environment for students to enjoy their residential accommodation. The students' health and safety is protected through systems for checking aspects of safety around the building. These systems include a process for risk assessment, checks on gas, electricity and portable appliance testing. Fire safety checks ensure that there are regular fire drills and that the young people are very clear regarding what they should do if there is a fire. Checks have not been regularly completed to see if the fire doors close properly.

The school operates a staff vetting procedure and staff are aware of the need to safeguard students. There has been progress since the last inspection to ensure that each member of staff has received all the relevant checks that are required, helping to keep the students as safe as possible. However, Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks have not been completed on governors. The headteacher is clear that no governor will now go to the residential provision unless they have a CRB check.

There is a well established support system in the residential provision to ensure that students' educational achievement has a high priority. Effective communication between classroom staff, residential staff and parents promotes consistency for students. The educational achievements of students are celebrated and promoted through the 24-hour curriculum. A recent activity holiday has taken place for some students. This has further helped them to make progress on their goals and promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

There is a good working partnership between parents and the school. This helps to promote the students' welfare as they get consistent messages from both home and school. Staff are proactive in ensuring students maintain contact with parents and respond to individual students' wishes during their stay. The school actively involves parents in the life of the school through parent workshops and regular contact with them. The students themselves can contribute their views about the residential provision and there are questionnaires issued after each stay to ensure that they are given opportunities to express their opinion. Staff ensure that on a

day-to-day basis, the students can express their wishes and feelings about their daily life at the school.

Systems are in place to monitor the quality of the residential provision and daily lives of students in residence. However, this monitoring is not always recorded so the documentary evidence of this is weak. The school's staffing policy ensures that the level of staffing is good and meets every student's needs very well. There is good continuity of staff so that students' relationships with them are not disrupted. The staff are highly motivated by their work with the young people and clearly enjoy their job. They are very knowledgeable about the students' needs. As a consequence, the students receive a good quality of care.

The staff training and development programme includes training opportunities and a personal development plan for all staff. The school places a strong emphasis on the support, training and development of its staff. As a result, the staff possess the skills and knowledge required to look after the students well.

What must be done to secure future improvement? Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that records of all physical intervention are kept in a bound and numbered book, and include the effectiveness and the consequence of the physical intervention (NMS 10.14).

Ensure that written guidance regarding safeguarding is adhered to, in line with the Local Safeguarding Board Procedures (NMS 5.7).

Ensure that the headteacher, or senior staff delegated by the headteacher to do so, monitor and sign the records as set out in the National Minimum Standard (NMS 32.2).

Ensure that fire fighting equipment, including fire doors, is tested in accordance with guidance received from the Fire Authority (NMS 26.6).

Ensure that appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks for governors are in place (NMS 27.1).

Ensure that parents know how to make a complaint directly to Ofsted (NMS 4.8).

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further strategies to ensure that the progress made by boys and girls in their learning is more consistent in all subjects.
- Develop more effective links with mainstream schools to promote the personal development of students and extend learning opportunities, particularly for the more able students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average and is weaker in literacy than numeracy. Compared with their relative starting points, achievement is good and students make good progress over their time in school. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Students with ASD are now successfully integrated into other classes and the standard of teaching they receive is now good. The increased use of assessment information, particularly in the core subjects, is contributing significantly to the good progress students are making. This has resulted in an increased number of students entering for national tests at the end of Year 9 in mathematics and science and more achieving Levels 3 and 4. Students have not been entered for English as their literacy skills have made it difficult for them to access the

test papers, but teachers' assessments show that they are making similar progress as in the other core subjects. However, the school has recognised the need for more specialist English teaching in Years 7 to 9. The number of students in Year 11 entered for external examinations has increased, as has the number of qualifications gained by individuals. In 2007, half of Year 11 students gained a GCSE in mathematics. The unvalidated test results for 2008 show a continuing upward trend and the school was awarded the Basic Skills Mark in March of this year. The school has recognised the differences in achievement between boys and girls and, through analysis of assessment data, has identified the areas of differing performance. A start has been made on addressing this through a topic-based approach to engage boys more effectively in the learning process, but too little has been done to resolve the differences in rates of progress between boys and girls in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students are happy; they enjoy their lessons and coming to school. The school has a friendly atmosphere in which all students feel valued and safe. The values promoted by the school ensure that students treat each other with courtesy and respect and are tolerant of differences. Behaviour is good and students demonstrate good attitudes towards their studies and towards each other. The school works hard to ensure students come to school regularly and attendance is good. It has successfully retained some students whose attendance at their previous schools had been poor. Students can accept responsibility through the school council and fund-raising events and are currently actively involved in Children in Need. Year 11 students, through the Junior Sports Leader programme, organise events for a local primary school. Vegetables grown by students are sold to the catering staff as part of a business and enterprise activity. Students understand how to stay healthy and the Sportsmark Gold and Healthy Schools Awards support this. There are good links with the local community and some of the residents benefit from the recently opened hairdressing salon where students not only learn hairdressing but also social skills. Students are developing an understanding of the wider and global community. There are fewer opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to integrate and develop socially beyond school. Students are actively encouraged to make choices relating to their future lives and are well prepared for life beyond school.

The personal development of students in the sixth form is good. Through college courses and life-skills training, they are well prepared for entering the adult world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Teachers relate well to their students and there is a positive learning atmosphere in each class. Activities set are often short and focused and this ensures that students stay on task throughout lessons and enjoy the learning experience. The increasing use of assessment information to plan lessons is making a significant contribution to the progress that students are making, particularly in the core subjects, and the process of setting targets is becoming more challenging. However, the use of assessment information is not as well embedded in the foundation subjects. There is a good focus on helping students understand what they are going to learn at the start of each lesson and they evaluate their own progress in learning and behaviour and effort at the end of the lesson. Older students are

encouraged to check their progress against their learning goals. Questioning is often effectively used to check students' understanding and clarify their thinking. Teachers use a variety of strategies, including the good use of practical resources, to support learning. Teaching assistants are well briefed and support teaching and learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum that is very well adapted to their needs and effectively engages them in the learning process. There is an appropriate focus on developing literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 and progress in reading has improved through the strategies the school has introduced. The extended day includes a range of enrichment activities. The school continually seeks to broaden the vocational accreditation offered to students and has recently opened a hairdressing salon. Students in Years 10 and 11 attend college one day a week for a series of taster courses, which will lead to accreditation, and this, together with work experience opportunities and business enterprise activities, prepares them well for life beyond school. There is a range of good opportunities for post-16 students who all attend college following courses of their choice. They also benefit from a life skills programme tailored to meet their personal needs. Programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship underpin much of the school's work and have a significant impact on the development of personal skills. There are many opportunities for students to go on visits to theatres and galleries and good use is made of the local community to support learning. Opportunities for students to experience mainstream provision are limited as links with other schools are not well established. This limits students' opportunities to integrate socially with their peer group and affects their confidence in attending courses in mainstream schools, particularly for the more able students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a high standard of care for all its students. Parents report a high degree of satisfaction with the school. The eight-week 'Living with Teenagers' course for parents and carers was successful and is the first of a series to develop a support network for parents. Good links with outside agencies help to ensure that the needs of students are fully addressed. There are good, supportive relationships between students and staff, and students willingly approach staff if they have any concerns. Care is taken when students enter the school to ensure they feel safe and secure and enjoy school. The early identification of potential issues that could affect the learning or personal development of students is a strength of the school. Excellent use is made of staff expertise to address issues before they become a significant problem and at all times the sensitivity of the student is paramount. Students are involved with monitoring their progress in learning but marking does not always inform students of what they need to do to take their next steps in learning. Students in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form are encouraged to look at potential career options with guidance from the relevant agencies and to make appropriate course choices. Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students and their health and safety are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has successfully led the school through a period of instability and has been instrumental in bringing about the changes necessary for school improvement. There is a good capacity for the school to continue to improve. She is well supported by her senior leaders and they have a clear vision about development priorities for the school based on accurate self-evaluation. They have been successful in improving most areas of the school since the previous inspection. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and teachers are supported to improve their skills. Teaching is now good with some outstanding practice. The better use of assessment information and setting of targets for students has increased the rate of progress students make. Analysis of examination data and teacher assessments are used to identify areas of underperformance such as that between boys and girls. Strategies are being developed to address this, such as a topic-based approach, which will engage boys more effectively, but at present, this is an area for development. The school is committed to community cohesion and works well with the local community for the benefit of students. The curriculum offers diverse opportunities for students to increase their understanding of the United Kingdom and global communities. The range of enrichment opportunities is available to all students, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and equal opportunity is promoted well throughout the school. Governors support the school well and visit regularly to observe lessons and undertake health and safety checks. They offer challenge to the school's leadership and have been instrumental in helping the school to overcome its difficulties.

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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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

12 November 2008

Dear students

Inspection of Maplewell Hall School, Loughborough, LE12 8QY

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and helping us during the school's inspection. Your school is a good school and all staff have worked hard to make sure that you make good progress in your learning and personal development. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know about:

- You really enjoy coming to school and being involved in all the activities.
- You develop good skills in learning how to look after yourself and are well prepared for life when you leave school.
- You like to take responsibility and are good at organising events and fund-raising activities.
- The school monitors your progress well and offers you good support and guidance when needed, both in your personal development and learning.
- The school is well led and the teaching you receive is good.
- Students in the sixth form are encouraged to become independent and mature young people.
- You really value the 'sleep over' opportunities you have.

To make the school even better, we have asked the school to:

- Make sure that both the boys and girls make the same progress in learning.
- Make sure that more links are made with mainstream schools to support your personal development and to provide more learning opportunities, especially for those of you who find learning easier.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Goodchild Lead inspector