

Heatherwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135544
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	341664
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon 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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Pynegar
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Ray
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors spent just over half of the time looking at learning. They observed 11 lessons and saw nine teachers. Inspectors held meetings with the chair of governors and the headteacher, middle and senior leaders and other staff, and with a small group of pupils. They observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation, including records related to safeguarding, the school's data and other evidence of pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's plans for its further development and improvement. Inspectors also looked at 11 parental questionnaires and also questionnaires completed by staff and by a small number of pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the links with parents and carers, the community and others
- the systems to show pupils' progress
- the impact of the actions taken by the school's leaders over the last years on the outcomes for pupils
- the plans to develop the sixth form
- the contribution to learning made by the resources and the school staff.

Information about the school

Following reorganisation of special school provision across the local authority, Heatherwood School opened in September 2008 as a new special school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple disabilities and/or difficulties. The roll includes a good number of pupils who have severe medical conditions and physical disabilities.

The school replaced the separate provision that had been spread across seven special schools and occupies the former site of one of them, with some modifications to the building and facilities. Specialist facilities include a hydrotherapy pool. The local authority uses specialist teams based at the school for moving and handling, and communication. They work both within school and with around 150 pupils in local schools on outreach provision. The school has a full-time nursing team.

The school provides education for 60 pupils aged between three and 19 years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Over half are non-verbal. Three pupils are looked after children. The school is organised into two sections, a primary school section including the Early Years Foundation Stage and a secondary section, including the sixth form.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Heatherwood is a good school. The headteacher has a clear vision, shared by all the staff, to enable all pupils to achieve well and enjoy their learning. The school has done much in the short period of time since its establishment, drawing in staff and pupils from several different schools. Pupils' achievement and enjoyment are good. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are outstanding. This is because they are happy at school, the curriculum is good, relevant and highly personalised to their needs and they are well taught. Pupils receive an exceptionally high quality of care, guidance and support from all the staff: teachers, classroom assistants, medical and other associate staff. There is a calm yet purposeful learning atmosphere in school. All staff place a high priority throughout on developing pupils' communication and social skills, and on fostering their independence.

In lessons, staff work together very effectively as teams so that pupils get a great deal of individual help and support for their needs and to facilitate their learning. Consequently, pupils' learning and progress are good. Levels of resources are high and are a real strength of the school, enabling all pupils to take a full and active part in lessons, whatever their level of need. Parents' and carers' views are very positive. Pupils interviewed say that they really enjoy school.

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The school provides an exciting, vibrant and happy learning environment in which children settle quickly, are exceptionally well looked after, feel secure and thrive. Children's progress is tracked carefully, but the recording system is not sufficiently refined to show what works and what does not for each child when trying to accomplish a very small step in learning. The sixth form is satisfactory. There has been a period of discontinuity in leadership that has affected the pace of development. Outcomes for the young people are, nevertheless, satisfactory. Recently, the sixth form has become reinvigorated and there are good plans already in hand for its further improvement.

Self-evaluation is accurate. The school knows where and how it could improve further. Leaders and governors have set appropriate priorities for future development and have ensured that the procedures and practice to help safeguard pupils are good. The headteacher is supported well by a strong team of senior leaders who, together with governors, show good capacity to sustain the school's improvement. The school has forged excellent partnerships with other schools, health and education professionals, providers and agencies that enrich its curriculum and enhance the opportunities for pupils' personal development. The appointment of a parent support adviser is having a good impact on links between school and home, furthering the school's aim of working

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closely with families to support their children's learning and well-being.

The school's leader and managers recognise that assessment practice, though satisfactory overall, is still developing. There are a number of good features, such as the high degree of personalisation of learning and the setting of targets for pupils. Systems are well established in the primary section but have been only very recently extended to the higher age groups. The school's data on pupils' progress reflect the good learning seen in lessons during the inspection, but the system has not been running long enough to enable leaders and managers to analyse pupils' progress in depth, nor to compare their progress easily to other schools in similar circumstances.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the systems for assessment that have recently been established throughout the school:
 - – to show more clearly the progress individual pupils make over time
 - – to be able to set challenging and appropriate targets for each pupil, possibly based on identifying very small steps in learning
 - – to begin to be able to compare the progress pupils make with that made by pupils with similar needs nationally
 - – to provide a check that teachers' practice in assessment across the school is consistent.
- Enhance provision in the sixth form:
 - – by considering further opportunities for fostering students' personal development and accreditation of their learning, including through links with the wider community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Learning and progress, as observed in lessons and in the school's records, are good. Pupils benefit from excellent resources, such as electronic communication aids and wheelchairs, and a wide range of high-quality classroom resources that allow them to access the curriculum. Pupils are taught in very small teaching groups with one-to-one help. These factors ensure that each pupil has sufficient opportunity to maximise learning. Using communication devices such as voice and speech aids, signing and switches, pupils demonstrate their understanding, ask questions and, where they are capable, discuss matters related to what they are learning. Through making choices, pupils further demonstrate what they know. Teachers carefully record pupils' progress. Enjoyment is high: many smiles and frequent humour shine through.

Pupils interviewed told the inspector that they felt very safe in school and could turn to staff to help them when they needed it. They move around the school easily and with good regard for the safety of others when in electronic wheelchairs. Behaviour is outstanding: pupils concentrate for long periods and actively participate in lessons, showing a keen interest in learning.

Pupils are encouraged well to think about their health, especially related to eating

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healthily. They take part in regular exercise and/or physiotherapy, as well as swimming, to help them feel comfortable and to promote their physical well-being.

The promotion of social skills is strong because staff recognise the importance of preparing pupils for their lives in the community beyond school and their immediate family. Accordingly, there is a carefully planned programme of visits and visitors, and links with other schools, that promote pupils' personal development effectively. Staff successfully encourage courteous, cooperative and thoughtful responses to others. Attendance is satisfactory, despite pupils' necessary absence for medical reasons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and often outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons very effectively to ensure that they meet pupils' individual needs, setting highly personalised tasks and activities. Teaching is imaginative, holding pupils' attention well. Accordingly, pupils

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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thrive, as evidenced by the calm and enjoyable atmosphere in all the lessons visited. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can do. Lessons challenge pupils to try hard and promote well their independence in movement, speech and thought. Staff are highly skilled at promoting pupils' skills in communication.

Teachers and assistants have benefited from recent training in assessment so that they can more confidently recognise the levels individual pupils are working at and the small steps of progress that they make. Good practice in assessment is evident in the primary section of the school and is now being extended to the older year groups. Pupils have targets in the key subjects of literacy and numeracy, with plans in hand to track progress more closely in other subjects and to refine how data are used when setting pupils' targets.

The curriculum engages pupils well: it is stimulating, but balanced well with times of relaxation so that pupils do not tire. It is relevant to pupils' lives and is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as visitors into school. A programme of lunchtime activities has grown so that pupils are now able to choose what they would like to do. Staff have completed training in safety related to rebound therapy (trampolining) and this activity is shortly to be introduced. An increasing number of extra-curricular events now involve parents and carers.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and are a major factor in pupils' enjoyment of school. Associate staff are deployed very efficiently to work alongside pupils, helping them to enjoy learning, whatever their level of need. Pupils' personal and medical needs are met sensitively and discreetly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior team have worked together for over a year and have shown that they can make a difference. They support staff well through a good programme of professional development focused on improving learning and assessment, but also on ensuring a safe and secure environment for pupils. Cross-curricular teams involving teachers, governors and other staff are leading on implementing the next steps for improvement, showing strong collaborative working across the school. Resources continue to develop: a new sensory room and soft play room for older pupils were nearing completion at the time of the inspection.

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Of particular note is the growth in 'extended school' activities, such as the highly successful summer holiday provision, involving school staff. Parents value the security of knowing that their children are with adults they know well and in familiar surroundings. This model has now been adopted by the local authority.

Teachers and assistants work very closely and effectively with the medical and specialist teams in school. Strong partnerships with a wide range of relevant external agencies contribute extensively to the excellent care given to pupils and their families. The school's positive, caring ethos enables pupils to feel safe and secure, creating an environment in which pupils feel confident they can report any worries.

Governance is good. Governors provide good levels of challenge to the school. Lines of responsibility are clear and swift action is taken to update procedures. Minutes of meetings, discussions and case studies of the school's practice show that procedures for safeguarding are robust. Recruitment and vetting procedures are thorough.

The promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination are excellent. The school successfully looks outwards to its community in seeking to promote positive images of disability and to counteract prejudice. The promotion of community cohesion is good: links to support pupils' learning and well-being are extensive within the community and, increasingly, with other schools nearby and further afield; for example, a link for science with a school in Northumberland, the Rotary club support for the sensory garden, and a local primary school link with some shared classes. The school has audited what it is doing and decided which aspects to develop further.

Staff value every pupil, encouraging all to do their best. Pupils are given roles and responsibilities around school, often connected to accomplishing daily tasks such as being monitor for milk or for registers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a very wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Induction arrangements are good. Home visits and the many opportunities parents and carers are offered to visit school with their children ensure that important information is shared and that staff and families can collaborate in designing each child's individual learning journey.

Outcomes for children are good. Children make good progress in all six areas of learning. This is because the good, and sometimes outstanding teaching is supported exceptionally well by a highly-skilled, dedicated team of teaching assistants.

Children make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, making huge gains in developing confidence and independence. Staff skilfully use an effective range of communication strategies such as signing, symbols and technological aids to encourage children to understand language and begin interacting together.

Children quickly develop an understanding of daily routines through the consistent approaches staff adopt to teaching individuals and groups. Staff match children's learning well to their individual needs, organising a wide, imaginative range of activities to hold their interest in the pursuit of achieving a particular objective, such as developing a child's understanding of simple vocabulary or the taking of turns. Relationships are excellent, shown through the fun and laughter the children share with all staff.

Assessment is good. It is used effectively to identify what children can do, to plan the next steps in learning and to adapt the learning activities to meet each child's specific needs. However, records of children's achievement do not always identify the tiny steps they make towards meeting specific targets. Nor do they describe which teaching strategies have been successful in enabling them to do so.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. Links with parents and carers are excellent. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the advice and support given to them and their children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

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The sixth form is satisfactory. There are already a number of strengths: learning is highly personalised and is made relevant to students' lives. Students' independence and social skills are promoted well. For example, in a good lesson observed, students each had a different task to do related to a shopping trip. Each student was at a different stage: planning the trip, going out or doing follow-up work, such as recalling correctly the sequence of events when going to a supermarket. Another student was using a joystick to select information on a tourist destination website.

Students are all encouraged to have work experience placements. As a direct result, one student has had an offer of part-time employment promoting equalities to other schools.

This aspect of preparation for adult life, students' place in and contribution to their community, is receiving increasing emphasis in the curriculum. Students have opportunities for their learning to be accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) but plans are now underway to extend the range of qualifications students can obtain from September 2010 to include units of work accredited by the Association of Qualifications Alliance (AQA).

There has been some discontinuity in leadership in recent months, but the sixth form is now poised to move forward again.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parent and carers are very satisfied with what the school provides for their children. There were only a few questionnaires completed but these were very positive. 'The staff are fantastic!' was a typical comment. Inspectors did not find any evidence to support the one negative view expressed. The school works very closely with the parent support adviser to ensure that there are good links with families and that parents and carers have good channels to express their views. Inspectors discussed with the school how effective this initiative was. Records show good impact, for example in encouraging parents and carers to come into school and in helping and supporting families.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heatherwood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	58	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	67	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	50	4	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	42	3	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	50	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	42	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	58	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	6	50	2	17	0	0	1	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	58	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	42	3	25	1	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	50	2	17	1	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	50	3	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	58	4	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heatherwood School, Doncaster, DN2 6HQ

I am writing to thank you for all your help when I came with Mr Kingston to inspect your school recently and to tell you what we thought.

- Your school is good.
- You are making good progress. You all really enjoy school and you try hard.
- The curriculum is good. The staff are very keen to help you in communication. We liked the things for you to do at lunchtimes and the summer school we heard about.
- The school's resources are excellent: all the voice aids, electric wheelchairs and the wide range of resources in lessons, all help you to learn and be independent. They help you to show teachers what you know and can do.
- You told us the teachers are good and we agree. The lessons are really interesting.
- All the adults work really well together in lessons to help you learn and to check that you feel comfortable. They know you all very well.
- The care the staff provide for you is excellent!
- Your parent and carers are very happy with the school.
- You told us you feel safe in school and can talk to the staff if you are unhappy.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are kind and considerate to each other.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children settle in quickly and get to know the routines.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. We were pleased to see that what you are learning is helping you prepare for life after school.
- Your school is well led. The staff all have high expectations of you.

We have asked Mrs Ray to think about two things to make the school even better:

- the teachers note down carefully how you are doing in lessons, but the system for this is still quite new in some parts of the school. It needs to show more clearly even the very small steps you make in your learning
- in the sixth form, carry out the plans to increase the qualifications you can get and the opportunities for you to get out and about in the community.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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