

Winchelsea Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113955
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	338267
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Muir
Headteacher	Steve Cook
Date of previous school inspection	November 2006
School address	Guernsey Road Parkstone Poole Dorset BH12 4LL
Telephone number	01202 746240
Fax number	01202 733024
Email address	Steve.cook@poole.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited ten lessons, held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and pupils, and looked at school policies and procedures, pupils' work, teachers' planning and reports to governors and the local authority. They also analysed the 35 questionnaires returned from parents.

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

- the achievement of pupils with differing special educational needs and/or disabilities and if achievement is of a similar standard in all subjects
- whether the curriculum meets the needs of all groups and ages of pupils and what are its strengths and areas in need of development
- the impact of leadership and management on the provision in the school
- what indicators exist to show that pupils feel safe and whether any bullying is managed well
- if personal, social and health education is covered well and the quality of pupils' achievements in this aspect.

Information about the school

Winchelsea is an average-sized special school catering for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include moderate (MLD) and severe (SLD) learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Given the extent to which the special educational needs of many of the pupils restrict their cognitive abilities, this inspection report does not include a grade for attainment in relation to all schools. In some classes there are pupils from several different year groups. There are a very small number of children of pre-school age and a significant minority of pupils in the care of the local authority. Only a few pupils come from ethnic backgrounds other than White British. The school is due to commence extensive building work as part of the national Building Schools for the Future project.

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

Winchelsea is a good school where all groups of pupils, irrespective of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in bringing about important improvements to the provision, such as developing the specialist skills of staff and improving the quality of the accommodation. Recent improvements to achievement in specific subjects also reflect the positive impact of leadership and management and, together with the drive and ambition shown by the leadership team, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve further. The school has become a valued member of the local authority education provision, and staff from Winchelsea provide excellent outreach support to mainstream schools experiencing difficulties with individual pupils.

Pupils' achievement is good because they make good progress in their learning. Pupils also now achieve equally well in all subjects, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy being in the school and relate very well to the staff. Their good attendance testifies to this. Pupils confirm that they know they are safe and that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with well by staff. This encourages them to have the confidence to work together and try the many different activities on offer in and out of the school.

The good quality of teaching is having a positive impact on ensuring that pupils with differing special educational needs and/or disabilities all make similarly good progress in their learning. Teaching is particularly effective in the primary department and for the Early Years Foundation Stage, where very good lesson planning consistently ensures that the different ability levels of pupils are considered carefully. In the lessons seen in the secondary section of the school, although nothing less than satisfactory was observed, the planning and delivery of lessons do not always take sufficient account of pupils' different abilities.

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well. Good planning between staff ensures that any possible concerns relating to pupils from different years in the same class are addressed. A very good balance exists between individual learning and opportunities to work together. Personal, social and health education is now covered well throughout the school. The enrichment of the curriculum is strong, with pupils taking part in a wide range of visits and many visitors coming into school. Many of the activities of the curriculum involve pupils using the facilities of the local community, including the specialist science laboratory of a nearby combined school.

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These very good links ensure that pupils are fully involved in the local community. However, plans to enable pupils to gain a broader understanding of this country and other parts of the world are more limited and are not based on a sufficiently robust evaluation of what currently is covered in the curriculum.

A good emphasis is placed on ensuring equality of opportunities for all pupils. This is achieved through ensuring that positive support is given to each pupil on an individual basis to enable them to share similar experiences to each other. Very effective measures are in place to identify pupils at risk. As a result, some individual pupils make outstanding improvements in their progress and enjoyment of life. Good procedures exist to ensure that the few pupils of minority ethnic backgrounds and children in the care of the local authority are given the support to achieve at similar levels to other pupils.

The school is led well by the headteacher, who has a strong grasp of the need to carefully monitor the performance of staff and pupils. This has led to an accurate self-evaluation process that is informing further school development effectively. The headteacher has collated an excellent set of data on pupils' achievements to show their rates of progress in learning. This has been analysed closely and interventions put in place where necessary. Individual records and observations confirm many positive outcomes for pupils that indicate they are adopting healthy lifestyles, making contributions to the school and wider community and making good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the school has not gathered sufficient data to monitor closely enough to show that all individuals and groups are making equally good progress in all of these aspects of their personal development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase over the next year the data collected on the outcomes for all individual and groups of pupils that indicate how well they are adopting healthy lifestyles, their contributions to the school and wider community and the extent of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Improve during this term the evaluation of the school's contribution to community cohesion and the quality of its plans to promote its engagement with a range of groups beyond the school and the immediate community.
- Ensure as soon as possible that lesson planning in the secondary department always takes account of the different ability levels of pupils in the group.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning and in the lessons observed this resulted in them making good progress in almost all the lessons. Examples include the positive responses of

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older MLD and SLD pupils in completing their project work for an external course, a younger ASD group excited by the range of communication and number activities in an excellent lesson based on improving communication skills, and younger secondary pupils eagerly participating in a cookery lesson.

The school's current data indicate all groups of pupils make good progress in many subjects. Older pupils gain passes in external examinations that represent good progress, and the range of subjects they are passing is increasing year on year. Good progress in pupils' learning is also demonstrated by most pupils achieving their individual improvement targets, which in most cases are very challenging. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils in the school.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Almost all develop improved skills in social interaction, even though for many, especially those with ASD, this is a huge challenge. Behaviour is good. Where pupils' learning disabilities may cause possible incidents, the management of their behaviour by staff is very skilful. Pupils extend their understanding of different religions and cultures through curricular opportunities, including special themed days and assemblies. The fact that every school leaver last year successfully moved to further education is a positive indicator of the progress they make in developing their economic well-being.

All pupils take part in a good range of physical education activities and many take up the lunch and after-school clubs. Fruit is popular at breaks and some pupils take up the opportunity to start the day with a healthy snack at the breakfast club. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to be part of the local community, and through the school council or taking on jobs like running the school tuck shop many make active contributions to the school community. A group have also worked with a specialised company to put forward their ideas for the new school building planned in the near future.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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

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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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the lessons observed teaching varied from having an outstanding impact on pupils' learning and progress to a few where it was just satisfactory. All lessons noted the different abilities of pupils but the best were planned effectively to match these with suitable learning activities. This was not consistently the case in the secondary department. In almost all lessons teaching assistants are effectively deployed in lessons. On occasions the excellence of their contribution is such that it is difficult to distinguish their contribution from that of the teachers. They are particularly effective at prompting pupils without supplying the answer. A key strength of teaching is the management of pupils' behaviour. This ensures that even if there are pupils with potentially challenging behaviour, the learning of others is not adversely affected.

In the primary department, assessment is used very well, often with pupils being fully involved in planning what their next steps should be. In the secondary department, questioning is used well to assess how well pupils are learning. Throughout the school, marking is clear and pupils are well supported in knowing what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is well thought out and provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities. Strengths include the emphasis placed on supporting pupils to improve their reading. This results in the good progress many of the pupils make. Clubs, including a popular youth club on a Friday evening, are well attended and add greatly to pupils' social experiences.

High quality care, support and guidance are embedded in practices throughout the school. They contribute greatly to the good progress all pupils are making. Pupils and parents are well supported by staff, who encourage all other agencies to secure the best outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management are having a positive impact on the quality of provision and pupils' achievements. Led very effectively by the headteacher, the senior leadership team have established a positive and ambitious learning environment where the quality of support for each individual pupil is high. The excellent partnerships with other agencies support this well. The school makes a positive contribution to developing community cohesion locally, but has yet to fully promote engagement of pupils with groups beyond the school and its immediate community.

Senior leaders have a good knowledge of the progress of each pupil. They have collected data on pupils' achievement and progress and take action if weaknesses are identified. For example, data last year looked to indicate that pupils achieved less well in personal, social and health education. Action taken, including introducing a new scheme of work, has raised pupils' overall achievement to a level similar to that seen in other subject areas. Less information is available on outcomes that show how aspects of pupils' personal development are developing. Very good work is being done to develop a programme to show how pupils with ASD are progressing in developing their independence and ability to communicate and relate to others. This programme is at the early stages of implementation but is already an example of excellent innovative practice.

The school has a very thorough understanding of the importance of safeguarding pupils. Both the headteacher and the chair of governors put a considerable emphasis on this. For example, at the time of the inspection there was a comprehensive range of policies and procedures in place to ensure that effective measures minimise risks for the many activities pupils are involved in.

Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. They have been heavily involved in the planning for the new school building, taking careful note of the views of other stakeholders. Through the chair they are also developing good links with subject leaders to increase their understanding of work and pupils' achievements in each subject. Resources are used well and are linked well to the needs of the pupils.

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

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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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision for the Early Year’s Foundation Stage children is good. This is leading to their achievement being good in all aspects of their learning. Good recording of progress is in place and work is well matched to their needs. The environment and resources are colourful and appealing, with safety and children’s welfare given a high priority. Pupils enjoy learning, as was evident in a lesson observed where the pupils engaged in a range of activities, including happily responding to a soft toy called Harry by asking questions and successfully participating in a game that involved turn-taking. The classroom space is well organised and pupils are clear about expected routines. The overall management of the unit is good and the very newly appointed leader is already showing positive signs of developing the provision further.

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

Views of parents and carers

‘We are really happy with Winchelsea School, everyone is so friendly,’ is how one parent described his view of the school, and this is supported by the majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. These parents praise a variety of aspects including the efficiency of staff and the way they address the different needs of the pupils. Parents like the environment, one stressing how the school does its best with the accommodation.

Only six out of the 35 responses had a negative mark or comment. Of these, five had concerns about the school’s leadership and management and that the school does not take enough account of parental suggestions and concerns. Four expressed

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concerns about whether the children are well prepared for the future. Two of those with concerns felt that the school does not keep their child safe. Evidence available from the inspection does not corroborate these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Winchelsea 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 42 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	49	14	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	63	11	31	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	13	37	20	57	0	0	2	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	23	22	63	3	9	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	49	14	40	2	6	1	3
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	12	35	20	57	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	46	17	49	1	3	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)	12	34	17	49	2	6	2	6
The school meets my child’s particular needs	17	49	11	31	4	11	2	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	40	16	46	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	40	15	43	5	14	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	17	49	9	26	5	14	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	18	51	12	34	3	9	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 all 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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>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 pupils' 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.



17 September 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Winchelsea Special School, Poole BH12 4LL

Thank you for being so friendly when I and the other two inspectors visited recently. We all enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and seeing all the exciting things you do.

We think your school is good. The headteacher and the staff help you all a lot. They ensure that you make good progress with your learning. They also make sure you are always safe in school and when you go on visits. We can see you enjoy school and make friends with the staff and other pupils. All the activities you do look to be very exciting.

To be an even better school we have asked your staff to:

- write down all the good things you do in school to stay healthy and work with others outside school
- make sure you know more about this country and the rest of the world
- help those of you in secondary classes to make sure all of you make good progress in lessons.

I hope this letter helps you know about the report but remember you can always talk about it at home or in school if you need help understanding some parts of it.

Keep working hard.

Best wishes,

Charles Hackett
Lead inspector

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