

Lancasterian School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105608
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287276
Inspection date	11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Shaun Knight
Headteacher	Mrs C Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	Elizabeth Slinger Road West Didsbury Manchester M20 2XA
Telephone number	0161 4450123
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school makes provision for students with physical disabilities. A significant proportion of students have additional complex speech and language, medical and behavioural difficulties. There is a nursery with children under five where able-bodied children are taught alongside disabled children. As part of the 'Barrier Free Programme' this school supports 53 pupils with physical disabilities who are fully included in 16 primary schools and one secondary school. Recent staff restructuring enables the school to better meet students' medical and therapy needs. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic families where English is not the first spoken language is high. The school has more students from asylum seeker families than is typical nationally. There are a few students in public care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Maximum dignity and the highest achievement for every student drives the whole school community. As soon as it is recognised that a student can cope in mainstream, he or she transfers. The headteacher's vision of equipping physically disabled students to be effective communicators and independently mobile is shared by all. Her leadership and that of the other senior managers is outstanding. This is a self-critical and very successful school, which thinks 'outside the box'. The decision to appoint a part-time speech therapist skilled in different types of communication and a full-time occupational therapist has paid dividends in improving the quality of educational provision for students and in driving up standards. Achievement is outstanding. Standards, although low because of students' learning difficulties, are above those found typically in similar schools. Personal development is outstanding. Students make important decisions about their quality of care and academic goals. They are involved in their annual reviews and they contribute to the school's extremely effective development planning.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding because it challenges and supports students in becoming independent learners and enables them to reach for their full potential. The curriculum is excellent because it is tailored exceptionally well to the needs of the individual. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and students are safe at school. Health professionals and educational staff work together very effectively to ensure that students are positioned correctly to feed and toilet themselves. Creative and innovative work goes into the positioning of switches and provision of a range of electronic communication aids. This equipment enables students to move their wheelchairs by themselves, communicate what they want, and to pose and answer questions. The headteacher has an acute awareness of the issues surrounding unintentional racism and ensures that asylum seekers admitted with no prior education are accurately and speedily assessed and, when appropriate, moved on to a more appropriate mainstream school. The support given to mainstream schools to help them include students with physical disabilities is excellent. Provision for non-disabled and disabled children alike in the nursery is extremely effective. Priorities in the school development plan are ensuring positive change for students, as evidenced in recent further improvements in students' speaking and listening skills. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding and the school provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement in communication and the use of information and communication technology to access learning is outstanding. Supported by a range of electronic communication aids and switches students talk and make their needs known, and move their wheelchairs independently in their classrooms. Each year 10% of students make such good progress that they are integrated fully into mainstream schools. Many of these succeed academically and go to university and enter professions alongside their able-bodied peers. Children under five make outstanding progress; able-bodied and a few disabled children are on target to reach the early learning goals. Throughout the school, progress is very good in reading, writing, mathematics, science

and personal, social, health and citizenship education. In all of these subjects students reach standards above those found typically in similar schools. A few students who remain in the secondary department of the school are prepared for GCSEs prior to college placement. Many excel in playing musical instruments which they access using adapted switches and also do exceptionally well in sporting events for the disabled. By the time they leave school for college, students have excellent self-advocacy skills, are confident, and are determined not to allow their disability to be a barrier to their learning. The majority are able to communicate and move independently.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is very good. Students with challenging behaviours associated with their learning difficulties and disabilities thrive because they are skilfully managed. These students are encouraged successfully to set their own behaviour improvement targets. Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school. All students, including children in public care and asylum seekers, feel valued and respected. Race relations are outstanding. Attendance is good. A few students are away from school for long periods while they receive hospital treatment. Students understand the importance of eating healthy foods and taking regular exercise to keep fit. Their personal safety is enhanced as they learn to travel safely and independently. Older students understand the danger of substance misuse and the importance of safe sex. Through exciting enterprise projects they learn to manage their own budgets alongside the skills required for employment. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Awareness of cultural diversity and the promotion of self-advocacy and independence skills are excellent. The 'student voice' is strong, including through a vibrant school council which effects change and improvement. Students contribute effectively to whole-school planning. A few students, because of medical conditions, are in regression, but all experience dignity and choice. Disability is not allowed to be a barrier to education for students in this very successful school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

A significant proportion of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers know students' learning difficulties and physical disabilities and skilfully plan to meet them. The special ingredient is the use of specific assessments to plan learning outcomes to raise students' achievement and improve their mobility and communication, lesson by lesson. Students are given one-to-one speech and occupational therapy to assist their access to learning. Electronic communication aids and interactive whiteboards are used very effectively to support students with their learning. Every student has an individual learning plan which is regularly reviewed and revised to raise achievement. Teaching focuses on developing students' life skills, thus equipping them to become independent learners. Students are asked about the ways in which they prefer to learn. This very effective approach impacts on teachers' planning to improve the range of activities they provide to motivate students and accelerate their learning. Learning through play in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Teaching assistants often take a lead in specific teaching programmes such as toileting and feeding; for many parents at this particular point in their child's development this is just as important as their academic achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Flexibly planned, the curriculum is tailored precisely to meet the academic and social needs of each student. Excellent modifications to the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education mean that statutory requirements are met alongside promoting students' independent mobility and communication. The emphasis on sport is outstanding, evidenced, for example, by students dancing confidently in their wheelchairs. Therapy is integral to the curriculum. It improves students' motor and speech skills. A range of electronic communication aids very effectively enable students to talk. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is outstanding. The work-related programme is excellent and develops students' independent travel skills exceptionally well. Through innovative access by switches, students play a range of musical instruments; this contributes exceptionally well to their enjoyment of learning. Accreditation opportunities are rich and support students in transition to college. The Foundation Stage curriculum is stimulating. Extra-curricular activities and visits enhance students' learning very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Health professionals and educational staff work together very effectively to ensure an extremely high level of care for each student. Imaginative and creative thinking goes into positioning students to support them to feed and move independently. Work with a charity to obtain the best switches to support students in moving their wheelchairs independently is commendable. Induction and transition arrangements are outstanding. Guidance about college courses is excellent. Students' views are heard at annual reviews and acted upon. Students say 'We love the opportunities the school gives to us to become independent.' Maximum dignity underlies toileting and the giving of medicines. Child protection procedures are robust. Risk assessments are thorough. Parents say 'The school understands our needs, including the difficulty in accessing respite care.' Great care is taken to communicate with parents in their mother tongue languages as appropriate. Techniques for encouraging sleep for their children are also taught to parents and are considered by them to be immeasurably valuable. Tracking of students' academic and life skills progress is outstanding. Assessment is used daily to set new small steps of progress for each student to reach. Often, to the delight of everyone in the school community, these small steps are mastered. Particular attention is paid to the assessment of the most vulnerable students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding, including that of the inclusion programme (the Barrier Free Programme) and the nursery for able-bodied and disabled children under five. Governance is very effective. The chair of governors strikes a fine balance between supporting and challenging the headteacher. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational and shows resilience in managing change in the interests of the students. Never complacent, there is a culture of continuous improvement in the school. Recent creative and innovative staff restructuring and the employment of exceptionally well qualified therapists and teaching assistants have driven forward a number of initiatives which have raised achievement. Very

good analysis of students' performance is used to plan and take decisive action to drive improvement. Systems for checking how well the school is doing are very effective. A very significant strength is the way in which students are involved in whole-school decision making and planning to raise their academic achievement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

I greatly enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for welcoming me so politely. You made me feel at home. I was delighted by the ways in which you all communicated with me so clearly, some of you cracking jokes with me using your electronic communication aids. I was struck by just how independent and confident you are in moving around the school site.

Here is what I judge to be very good about your school:

- the confident ways in which you make your needs known and pose questions using electronic aids, signing, and speaking using words
- the confidence and agility you demonstrate in moving around in your wheelchairs propelled by switches you control so well
- the very good progress you make in reading, writing, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and citizenship
- the outstanding teaching you receive and the challenge and fun you experience in learning
- the encouragement you are given in expressing your thoughts and asserting your rights
- the way in which your therapists help you communicate, move independently and gain such confidence and self-esteem
- the inspirational leadership shown by your headteacher and the excellent care and support you receive from a very effective staff team
- the excellent sport and music programmes which make your learning such fun.

Please continue to help your teachers maintain the hard work they do for you and help them in every way that you can.