

Hadrian School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131986
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	293909
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Besh Brown
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Rollings
Date of previous school inspection	September 2002
School address	Bertram Crescent Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE15 6PY
Telephone number	0191 2734440
Fax number	0191 2261150

Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils at Hadrian School demonstrate a wide range of severe, complex, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Increasingly, many pupils have associated physical and medical difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. This is the only such primary school in Newcastle and learners are representative of a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. About two thirds of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Just over a quarter of the pupils are from ethnic minority families. Sixteen pupils receive varying degrees of respite or long-term care. Many pupils are admitted other than at the usual time. Some transfer from mainstream schools as late as midway through Year 6, having failed to thrive in those environments. Boys outnumber girls by about two-to-one, which is not unusual in such schools. The school provides a wide and growing range of extended services.

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. It gives excellent value for money. The nature of pupils' difficulties means that they cannot meet the expectations for pupils in mainstream schools, so progress is measured against individual targets. These are very challenging and are nearly always met, and often exceeded. When they are not met, it is nearly always the result of these targets becoming unrealistic as a result of deteriorating physical or medical conditions. Pupils achieve this outstanding success because of highly visionary leadership, exceptional management, powerful governance and excellent teaching. The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection; the few minor weaknesses identified at that time have been remedied. The dedication and expertise of all staff and governors put the school in a very strong position to maintain its pre-eminence at the forefront of special education.

There is strength in depth. Achievement is uniformly high across all subjects of the expansive curriculum. Pupils love coming to school. They attend whenever they can, work hard and behave exceptionally well because there is a strong sense of community and each day is packed with exciting, purposeful activities. The school's extremely friendly and welcoming atmosphere contributes enormously to pupils' happiness and social awareness. The outstanding progress made in learning and personal development paves the way to ensuring the best possible future for all pupils. Tremendous attention is paid to pupils' physical and emotional well-being. A huge range of health workers and therapists contribute significantly, working closely with school staff to help pupils lead healthy, active lives. Grateful parents universally admire the school. They recognise what an excellent deal their children are getting and how outstandingly well they are cared for, guided and supported in safe surroundings. The school is very highly regarded by the local authority and has gained many national prestigious awards in recognition of its excellence and pioneering work. Staff are keen to share their expertise with other schools, thus benefiting many other children locally, nationally and internationally.

Effectiveness of the foundation stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstandingly effective. Most children enter it at the very earliest stages of learning and social development, and with very limited powers of communication. Assessment of their abilities and difficulties is perceptive, rapid and exceptionally thorough, giving staff a very clear picture of children's needs. Excellent teaching and support by very experienced staff then help children to make rapid progress. The joy in children's faces during registration suggested eager anticipation for the day ahead. Activities are exceptionally well planned and varied to ensure that no area of learning or development is neglected and no possible avenue to promote communication remains unexplored. Parents voice total support and many have expressed gratitude for the progress their children are making. The outstanding leadership and management of the Foundation Stage by the Key Stage 1 team leader contribute very positively to children's excellent preparation for transfer to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review and adjust individual targets more promptly when changing circumstances render previous targets unrealistic.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties means they cannot attain standards set for pupils in mainstream schools. Their progress is measured against challenging individual targets and these are met with an outstanding degree of success. When they are not, particularly in Key Stage 2, it is inevitably because these targets have become unachievable because of deteriorating health or increasing incapacity to learn.

Children enter the Foundation Stage at a very early stage of learning. Those with the most profound and complex learning difficulties rarely move beyond this point, but they make excellent progress in improving their ability to communicate their emotions and needs. By the time pupils with severe learning difficulties leave at the end of Year 6, many of them demonstrate a level of skills broadly similar to Year 2 pupils in mainstream schools. This is an exceptional achievement.

There is no evidence to suggest that any group of pupils achieves significantly differently to any other. Pupils who have experienced all of their schooling at Hadrian are frequently the highest attaining ones by the time they leave, despite having frequently started from a lower standard. Where pupils are from homes in which English is not the main language this is rarely a limiting factor in their learning but, if this is the case, they are given expert help and they achieve every bit as well as other pupils.

The evidence of inspection points to achievement being broadly similar in all subjects. This is because teachers share huge expertise in all areas of the curriculum. Each subject is exceptionally well led and each is made sufficiently inviting to encourage pupils to take interest and work hard.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Excellent moral and social development is clearly evident in the way that pupils contribute to the settled, supportive and happy atmosphere of the school. There is very little evidence of any inappropriate behaviour; there has never been a need to exclude any pupil and pupils of all religions and races mix obliviously and in harmony. Little acts of kindness are frequent and unprompted. Pupils are quick to share what they have with others in need. A simple action, such as sharing a glue stick with a partner who has lost theirs, demonstrated awareness of another's needs and showed that pupil to have developed an invaluable social skill. This awareness of others also contributes enormously to the safety of pupils, with older or more able ones unselfishly helping younger or those less able. The considerable joy and celebration in this school strengthens pupils' strong sense of spirituality and awareness of self-worth.

Pupils' cultural awareness is outstanding. It extends outwards from the local history of the community, to a great awareness of how people live in other parts of the world. Frequent initiatives to raise funds for people or communities facing problems are enthusiastically supported by staff, pupils and parents. Pupils participate enthusiastically in an exceptionally strong and varied programme of physical activity, much of which is expertly adapted to help them experience sensations that fragile bodies would otherwise not be able to experience. This, coupled with an eminently sensible approach to healthy eating, contributes greatly to pupils' well-being. Pupils are fully involved in making decisions that affect their lives and mould the school community. They are very involved in the selection of new staff and were seen to be making a positive contribution to the design of a 'secret garden' for the school.

Attendance is broadly similar to the national average. This is excellent achievement given the frequent hospitalisation of several pupils. There is virtually no unauthorised absence and many pupils attend even when they should not, such is their enjoyment of school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding. As a result, pupils show considerable enthusiasm for learning. This is why they achieve so well. Teaching and learning can be best described as relentless. Nearly everything that is done has a purpose based on an exceptional understanding of individual pupils' needs and potential. This is made possible by accurate assessment and frequent reviews of pupils' progress. Within, and between, lessons, teachers build carefully and remorselessly on prior learning, always checking carefully that what has been learned has been remembered. Lessons unfold gently but systematically. Teachers take great care to check that pupils are ready to learn and that expectations are realistic. From this point on, they make sure that each pupil is made aware of what they are expected to learn. Very little time is wasted between activities because teachers are well prepared and classroom assistants exceptionally efficient. Many of these assistants are highly skilled and all contribute enormously effectively to the care and education of pupils. Pupils are strongly encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves. Help is never gratuitous, so pupils gain independence and self-respect with the security of knowing that when they truly need help, they will get it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets all requirements and is exceptionally well enriched. Planning is extremely thorough and contributes particularly well to ensuring that there is smooth transition from the Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 1 and then on to Key Stage 2. Parents are strongly encouraged to contribute their views as to how well suited activities are to the needs of their children. Many staff have contributed to curriculum development on a national basis. The school has gained widespread recognition as a model of good practice in physical education, sport and inclusivity. Many health workers and therapists contribute enormously to the development of programmes which help all pupils to maximise their progress.

Close links with a city-wide education business partnership help pupils to develop enterprise, financial skills and teamwork. The school day is exceptionally well extended through a wide range of well supported clubs and activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care of pupils is outstanding. Their safety and well-being are treated as of the utmost importance. Everything possible is done to ensure that they are safeguarded and protected. Avoidable accidents are minimised through thorough assessment of possible risk in all activities. The contribution of many health and therapy workers is particularly well coordinated by the school leadership team, one of whom has special responsibility for ensuring the well-being of looked after children. Pupils from ethnic minority families are extremely well supported by assistants and interpreters who speak their first language. Parents are always consulted and encouraged to contribute to regular reviews of their children's progress. They express an exceptional depth of gratitude and confidence in the school's ability to bring out the best in their children. Enormous pride is taken in the premises, which are kept in an impeccable, clean condition.

Analysis of pupils' progress is thorough. This ensures that all pupils are given work which helps them to meet their targets. Some of these are not sufficiently adjusted in the face of changing personal circumstances with the result that they become unrealistic. This is only the case with published targets; those in individual education plans are much more frequently adjusted.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The school enjoys the total support of parents and the local authority. Staff speak as one in their commitment to bringing about continuous improvement and putting pupils first. The leadership team sets a high degree of challenge for staff and pupils alike. A recent visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors produced the comment, 'Managers know the strengths of the school well and are vigorous in pursuing improvement'. All staff contribute perceptively and effectively to self-evaluation and to the removal of potential barriers to further improvement. Parents and pupils are regularly consulted about proposed changes. Excellent resources are used with exceptional efficiency, especially as the range of extended services grows. Many senior staff contribute greatly to the wider community by sharing their expertise through training and contributing to professional journals. All staff are set challenging targets for improvement and these are invariably met and often exceeded. The very strong governing body makes an enormous contribution to the leadership and management of the school, providing an exceptionally well balanced degree of support and challenge. Their excellent 'Governor Handbook' has been adopted by many other local schools.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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



20 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hadrian School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 6PY

It was wonderful to have the privilege of visiting your school the other day. I had a lovely two days with you and left marvelling at how good the school was and how delightful you were. Special thanks to the School Council for inviting me to your meeting. I was hugely impressed by your ideas for the proposed 'Secret Garden'.

I have been visiting schools all over the country for a long time now and can honestly say that yours is one of the best. The report I've just written describes it as outstanding. That's as good as it gets.

I came to this conclusion because you are doing so well. You work extremely hard in lessons and because of this you are making excellent progress. You also behave very well and this helps to make the school a very happy place. I can see why you enjoy it so much. All of the staff are excellent and you are extremely well cared for.

Before I left, I suggested that the school keep checking whether the expectations of what you can achieve are realistic. Some of you get poorly at times and can't keep up. I think it should be recognised that it's not your fault.

I would like to wish you all good luck for the future.

All the best

Alastair Younger
Lead inspector