

Ash Villa School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120747
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291843
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	9
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lawlor
Headteacher	Mr Neil Barton
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001
School address	Willoughby Road Greylees Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 8QA
Telephone number	01529 488066
Fax number	01529 488239

Age group	8–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small special school. The pupils are all patients at Ash Villa psychiatric hospital. Most join the school from mainstream schools and the duration of placements ranges from a few days to over a year. Pupils' homes are mainly in Lincolnshire but a few are from other areas. At the time of the inspection, all the pupils were girls and were in Year 11, with the exception of one pupil. They spend breaks and lunch times under the supervision of hospital staff. Admission to the school on a daily basis is dependent on pupils' current state of health. Only four attended the school during the period of inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. This judgement matches the school's own view of its effectiveness. It provides good value for money. A mark of its success is that very ill and vulnerable pupils make good progress in their studies and achieve well. This is possible because the headteacher and staff work together to create a climate in which pupils feel secure and valued, but are left in no doubt that Ash Villa is a place for learning. As one pupil explained, 'school is educational and fun'. Strong links with the hospital staff enable teachers to quickly understand and take account of pupils' particular difficulties and circumstances. Pupils are very aware of this and appreciate that teachers 'work round' their problems. The excellent relationships that teachers establish very rapidly form a platform for pupils' good personal development and well-being. They say that they enjoy school greatly, partly because, as one pupil said, staff 'make us laugh and cheer us up'. The very calm atmosphere contributes to pupils' extremely good behaviour and ability to concentrate on their work. Care, guidance and support are good. The school takes full account of the advice of hospital staff, for example, to ensure that pupils are not placed under too much pressure to achieve.

Standards are broadly average and are dependent on pupils' attainment when they join the school. Year 11 pupils who sit GCSE examinations whilst attending Ash Villa are regularly successful. These achievements owe much to the good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are very adaptable and bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise across a wide range of subjects. Good liaison with mainstream schools ensures that pupils are able to continue with coursework and have this marked and moderated. The curriculum is good overall. It has some outstanding features, including its response to pupils' individual needs and the provision for physical education. The curriculum enhances pupils' learning and personal development significantly, although opportunities for practical experiences of the world of work are limited. No suitable accredited courses have been identified to cater for any pupils not following GCSE courses or who are disengaged from learning.

Leadership and management are good. Accurate identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses has led to good improvement since the previous inspection. Systems to measure the progress of individuals are effective. However, the school does not compare the achievement of different groups of pupils or overall performance from year to year, in order to help to identify where improvements are needed. The headteacher ensures that this is an outward looking school with very high aspirations, well placed to continue to improve. Parents think very highly of the school. Understandably, one praised its 'warm and friendly environment' and felt that, for the staff, 'nothing is too much trouble'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the Key Stage 4 curriculum, increasing the scope of accreditation and providing more opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work.
- Make more use of assessment information to establish how well the school is performing and to guide its future development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's rewards system is linked to pupils' academic work and their success in meeting targets in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Their individual scores and awards indicate that pupils make good progress, regardless of their levels of attainment. The focus on their particular needs and the amount of individual support they receive sometimes lead to very good progress in targeted areas, such as telling the time.

In recent years, Key Stage 4 pupils have tended to be higher or average attainers. They are often successful in GCSE examinations. Higher attaining pupils have achieved pass grades in as many as ten subjects, occasionally at the highest levels. Achievement in science has improved significantly since the previous inspection. A number of Key Stage 4 pupils are also successful in adult numeracy tests and a range of short life-skills courses, for instance, in basic food hygiene.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond positively to encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles. For example, they enjoy using the fitness suite of a mainstream school and welcome the brisk walk at the start of the school day. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe and are confident that there is no bullying in school. They confirm that their attendance is better than when in mainstream education, and absence is nearly always related to medical problems. Pupils are very understanding of each other's problems and a number of charities also benefit from their support. Opportunities to contribute to the school community are increasing. For instance, pupils have helped to produce a brochure for new entrants. Their good academic progress helps to prepare pupils for their future lives, but skills needed in the workplace are less well developed. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Cultural development is a particular strength, because pupils have such varied experiences of creating and appreciating music and art.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers miss no opportunities to boost pupils' self-esteem. As a result of the praise and encouragement they receive, pupils are confident to tackle new work and share their ideas. Small numbers in classes mean that teachers are able to provide plenty of support for individuals. Teachers are aware of what each pupil needs to learn next and they take this into account when planning lessons. Activities and resources are chosen very carefully, so they are relevant and motivate pupils to learn. However, best use is not always made of the available time. Sometimes, too much work is planned, so elements are rushed. On other occasions, the pace of learning is too slow. Pupils are regularly involved in assessing their own learning and they usually know how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Offering such a breadth of subjects is no mean feat in such a small school. The programmes of work for every subject provide a good framework for learning in each key stage, but staff adapt their plans readily to cater for pupils' individual needs. GCSE courses are often the backbone of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, in line with what pupils are studying in mainstream schools. Though other accredited courses are offered, the current range would be too difficult for lower attaining pupils. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of physical education and outdoor education, which includes sailing and horse-riding. Regular visits to support the curriculum, for instance, to the National Holocaust Centre, extend pupils' experiences and bring learning to life. Visitors are frequently recruited to enhance what the school provides, for example, through art and music workshops. Enterprise education has recently been introduced, but the school has correctly identified that work-related learning requires further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' well-being is given a suitably high priority and secure arrangements are in place to safeguard their health and safety. Risk assessments, for example, are very detailed and useful. Hospital staff are always available to help to manage pupils who are having difficulty coping with their mental health issues. Parents are confident that their children are looked after well and pupils feel safe in school. The personal support provided is particularly good. Pupils' emotional health is considered carefully at all times. Connexions advisers visit and guide older pupils as they prepare for the next stage in their lives. Systems to measure and record pupils' progress are under review by the school. They are currently most effective in literacy, numeracy and personal development, where pupils have individual targets to achieve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets the tone for the school through his determination that he and his staff are in the business of educating the pupils and not merely entertaining them. As a result, there is a clear focus on enabling pupils to achieve as well as possible, given their significant health issues. All staff have many areas of responsibility, and they meet these demands well. The school's development plan is very comprehensive and takes account of the headteacher's monitoring of aspects such as the quality of teaching. However, information about individual pupils' progress is not collated efficiently. This makes it difficult for the school to use the data as a tool to help identify its priorities. Governors are very keen to support the school and several visit and use their expertise in order to support aspects of the curriculum. They are kept well informed by the headteacher and are currently working towards becoming more directly involved in monitoring the school's performance. Finances are managed well and have led to improvements in the accommodation and resources.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ash Villa School, Willoughby Road, Greylees, Sleaford, NG34 8QA

I enjoyed my short time in your school and I'm glad to have had the chance to talk to some of you and visit your lessons. Thank you for your help.

I know that both you and your parents think very highly of the school. I can understand this and I agree that Ash Villa is a good school. The headteacher and staff provide a very calm and safe environment and take good care of you. I admire the way in which you continue with your studies, despite your health problems. I think you behave extremely well in school and your understanding of other pupils' difficulties is very mature.

You make good progress, because you are taught well. Your teachers have to be very adaptable to help you in so many subjects, up to GCSE level. Some aspects of the curriculum are outstanding, such as the variety of visits and physical education provided. I would like the school to find more opportunities for older pupils to learn skills needed during employment and to provide accredited courses for pupils who are not able to take GCSE examinations. Your headteacher and the staff have plenty of plans for making the school even better. I have asked them to make more use of their assessments of your learning, in order to help them identify where these improvements could be made.

I want to send each one of you my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector