

Hebden Green Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111505
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337694
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Clare

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Gaskell
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Farren
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2007
School address	Woodford Lane West Winsford Cheshire CW7 4EJ
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Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
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Boarding provision	Hebden Green Special School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC006614
Social care inspector	Joseph Hobson

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector. Approximately half of the time was spent observing learning. Twelve lessons were seen, involving 11 teachers and one Higher Level Teaching Assistant. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and partners from other organisations. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents including data on pupils' progress, teachers' planning, curricular documents, pupils' files, the school's self-evaluation, and 36 returned questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- the accuracy of the school's evaluation of pupils' progress
- the quality of pupils' personal development, including their behaviour
- whether the school makes good use of the information gathered from its monitoring and evaluation to bring about improvements
- how well the school's post-16 provision equips students with appropriate skills and knowledge for the future.

Information about the school

This school provides education for pupils with physical difficulties. Many pupils have additional needs including moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and boys outnumber girls by two to one. Most pupils are White British; much smaller numbers are from other ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils come from the wider Cheshire area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A small minority are looked after by a local authority. About half of all pupils, mainly of secondary age, stay one night a week in residence and the school provides extended day and short break provision.

The school has gained Arts Mark Gold, Inclusion Quality Mark, Activemark, Healthy Schools, Eco Schools Silver and Investors in Careers awards. It is a Teaching and Learning Academy Centre and has also achieved the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Hebden Green School is an outstanding school. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and are generous in their praise for the total commitment given by all staff to creating a warm and welcoming environment. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. They are happy, confident and gain a great deal of enjoyment from all that the school offers. Although academic standards are low owing to the nature of pupils' learning and medical difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils make good progress in their learning at each stage of school from their individual starting points. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a joyous place to be, children settle quickly and make outstanding progress in fully integrated provision.

Medical and therapy needs are skillfully incorporated into pupils' timetables. Themed work and information and communication technology (ICT) are particular strengths of an outstanding and flexible curriculum. Good teaching and carefully tailored programmes enable pupils to meet their challenging yet achievable targets. Lessons are well structured and capture pupils' interest. On occasion, teaching is less effective because work does not build successfully on pupils' knowledge and is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for pupils of higher ability. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued in school. Their behaviour is outstanding and pupils have total confidence that staff will resolve any problems. Response to the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles is outstanding and, in relation to their capabilities, pupils make excellent contribution to the school and the local community. Extensive links with other schools, businesses, colleges and local groups help make learning more relevant to everyday life.

The school makes outstanding provision for students in its sixth form which has a strong identity. The excellent preparation and guidance students receive for their future results in all transferring to further education or training. Boarding provision is outstanding and contributes greatly to the development of social skills and community awareness, particularly for older pupils. The residential element provides additional opportunities for pupils to mature and experience more independent decision taking in a well managed environment.

Central to the school's outstanding progress has been the drive, vision and empathetic leadership of the headteacher, well supported by senior managers. Very good progress is being made to coordinate the school's assessments with national progression guidance data. The school is very accurate in its self-evaluation: effective systems help to monitor progress and the governing body provides good support and challenge. Cooperative planning with multi-disciplinary organisations, national and community partners provides significant impetus for innovation and further development. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor teaching and the use of assessment more closely to make sure pupils make even better progress, by consistently:
 - using data to inform planning and target-setting in all lessons
 - ensuring that work set engages and challenges all pupils, particularly higher ability pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils across all key stages achieve well academically and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Many achieve this despite significant and sometimes degenerative illness. By the end of Year 6, pupils make excellent gains in their communication skills, which facilitate their good progress in literacy and numeracy through the school. By the end of Year 11, students with more complex needs learn to write simple sentences or communicate ideas through the use of symbols, switch technology and gesture signing. Pupils of higher ability complete modules of work towards external accreditation in English, mathematics and science, and in a range of additional subjects which are very well matched to their abilities. Pupils use ICT confidently and handle equipment safely in practical subjects. At all ages, pupils' physical needs are exceptionally well met.

Performance data shows progress in English last year to be stronger than in mathematics. Current tracking and observation indicate progress in mathematics to have improved as a result of a school-wide focus on numeracy. This focus extends effectively to the residential provision, where pupils were observed being encouraged to count out knives and forks when setting tables for meals. In all key stages, boys and girls make equally good progress regardless of their learning difficulties or ethnicity. The small number of pupils looked after by the local authority make gains at the levels of others in their groups.

Parents and carers say that their children love coming to school and pupils agree. This reflects their good attendance. Almost all pupils choose sporting activities to improve their health at lunchtime. Pupils show positive attitudes and genuine care for each other, spontaneously cheering and applauding the success of others in the medal assembly. They learn about keeping safe in their personal, social and health education lessons and have no fear of bullying. Pupils are very respectful of each other's needs, difficulties and opinions. Pupils have a keen understanding of right and wrong appropriate to their own abilities. They undertake responsibilities as school council members and represent the school in the community with great pride. Links with Soweto and the Czech Republic promote cultural awareness very effectively and through enterprise projects pupils have achieved Fairtrade status for their school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' good progress is promoted by mainly good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Teaching is enthusiastic, staff teams cooperate very well and there is a good understanding of pupils' needs. Additional resources effectively support pupils' physical and communication skills and a high level of sensitivity to pupils' feelings and needs is evident. As a result of excellent relationships, pupils are confident to contribute to lessons. In the best lessons, planning is precise, builds effectively on what pupils have learned and all pupils are actively engaged in challenging work towards individual targets. Pupils enjoy the creative arts and musical rhymes that reinforce their learning. Imaginative use of resources is a feature of good teaching and staff provide tangible examples to aid pupils' understanding. For example in one lesson, younger pupils were helped to understand human life-cycles through meeting a mum and her baby. This contributed well to pupils' interest and their enjoyment of the lesson. Learning objectives are emphasised in appropriate language and are checked at the end of most lessons. Timely recording and the use of observation and assessment data lacks consistency. As a consequence, on occasions, expectations for pupils of higher ability are too low, the work set does not always challenge them sufficiently so progress slows. The outstanding curriculum is well-managed, flexible, and carefully planned. Topic work is well embedded, and interactive opportunities make learning fun. A variety of practical,

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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multi-sensory and investigative play experiences promote learning effectively for younger pupils. Older pupils acquire good vocational skills through their work-related learning. Support for transition as pupils enter, change classes and leave the school is a major strength of the outstanding care. The class-based, medical and lunchtime staff provide seamless and invaluable support. The school's transport arrangements and care for pupils on arrival and departure are a model of outstanding practice.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's enthusiasm and outstanding dedication to driving the school forward promotes equally positive responses from staff. High morale is evident, staff teamwork is especially strong. Together, senior leaders provide committed and outstanding direction for development. Assessment for learning is good and highlighted for further improvement, revitalised through the appointment of an appropriately high level manager. Teachers are encouraged to extend their professional skills to embrace the new technology of the virtual learning environment. Target-setting is thorough and realistic. The school knows itself very well. Broader improvement planning focuses on upgrading a small number of the school's key aspects and developing its provision of additional services, with the ambition to achieve specialist school status. Governors are dedicated, maintain close contact through visits and residential involvement and monitor the school's progress effectively.

Outstanding local, national and international partnerships promote music, enterprise and cultural activities which have significant impact on pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. The school tackles equality of opportunity outstandingly well and is proactive in ensuring that there is no discrimination or harassment in school. Pupils develop good tolerance and understanding of the needs of others as a result. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments are outstanding and there is a high level of trust in the school and its staff. Involvement in local learning networks and multi-cultural projects prepare pupils very well for life in a diverse society. The school values all as individuals and through the curriculum, local and extended links, including its work as a Learning Academy, plans carefully and very effectively to promote community cohesion. Hebden Green provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make outstanding progress from their starting points because their individual needs are exceptionally well met. Parental involvement in learning is valued. Very well organised daily routines and meticulous planning clearly reflect children's individual needs. Children show great enjoyment in lessons, as a result of excellent relationships with key workers and stimulating multi-sensory activities in an exciting curriculum. The use of the Conductive education approach promotes independence very effectively and children are encouraged to make choices through photographs and symbols. Detailed assessments lead to highly skilled and sensitive interventions. Comprehensive annual reviews highlight multi-agency partnerships. High priority is given to ensuring that children are safe and well cared for and risks are monitored carefully. The school has very good indoor and outdoor environments with adaptable resources. Leadership and management are outstanding. Robust safeguarding procedures, high quality documentation and excellent organisation impact very well on children's progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and of high quality.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Sixth form

The school consistently maintains a very clear focus on preparing students for their future lives. Students say that they like the greater independence and flexibility of the sixth form and enjoy their courses very much. They are justifiably proud of their excellent work and achievements, many skilled in their command of ICT. Personalised pathways effectively ensure that students make informed choices about their learning. Opportunities to gain accreditation are matched very closely to individual needs and this contributes significantly to the outstanding progress students make. All students gain Entry level qualifications or unit awards, some achieve pass grades at GCSE level. Gains in life-skills are strongly reflected in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards students achieve. Teaching and learning experiences are facilitated exceptionally well to promote students' independence and the care, guidance and support is as exceptional in the sixth form as in the main part of the school. The excellent curriculum, work-related learning and college taster courses provide a wealth of meaningful opportunities for students to develop their self-confidence, work preparation and social skills. As a result, students make outstanding progress in their communication skills and personal development. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding at Hebden Green School is outstanding. The recommendation made at the last inspection has been fully addressed. The school has reviewed the content and structure of pupils' files making these more accessible to residential staff and pupils.

Pupils receive excellent support in respect of their health and development. The school has access to high levels of nursing and therapy services provided by the local primary care trust. Paediatric clinics are held regularly in school reducing the need for pupils' absence. Close links are maintained between health professionals, residential and teaching staff ensuring effective communication of pupils' health needs. The quality of health care provision is commendable. Medicines are safely administered and records are generally kept to a good standard. However, the policy in respect of controlled drugs is not adhered to. For example, the school does not maintain a controlled drugs register or a system to audit controlled medicines. This shortfall does not impact negatively on

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the care and safety of pupils; the overall systems are robust and trained nurses are responsible for the administration. Pupils are provided with a balanced and healthy diet and opportunities to undertake physical exercise and activities are frequent.

Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs and promote their privacy and dignity. Confidentiality is maintained, although physiotherapy areas are located in communal spaces and the security of some health information is not sufficiently robust. The impact of this on pupils is minimal. There is an effective complaints procedure, which is available in formats understandable to pupils with learning disabilities. Staff are skilled in communicating with pupils with communication difficulties and advocate effectively for them. Safeguarding training is provided to all staff, who demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the action needed to protect pupils from abuse. Pupils said that they feel safe, and are able to speak to someone if they are concerned. The support for pupils to develop socially acceptable behaviour is exemplary. There is a strong emphasis of rewarding good behaviour and celebrating success. Consequently, no sanctions have been imposed or incidents of physical intervention recorded. There are robust systems to vet visitors to the school. The rigorous recruiting, selection and vetting procedures ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are enabled to access education resources during evening hours. The provision of the extended day activities and clubs provides pupils with additional opportunities to develop their learning and skills. An extensive range of activities is provided by the residential staff, a number of which are linked to pupils' social, welfare and educational targets. Individual pupils' support is outstanding. There is seamless planning and provision for pupils' health and welfare needs. Parents and carers are particularly positive about the quality of respite care provided. For example, a parent commented, 'I think that Hebden Green is an excellent school. The staff all work very hard for the pupils. My child continues to learn new skills every day, growing in confidence and independence.' Staff are fully motivated and demonstrate a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of pupils.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Consultation with pupils about their care arrangements is particularly strong. Staff are skilled in ensuring that all pupils are enabled to make a meaningful contribution and participate in all aspects of the school. Support between pupils is exceptional, which is encouraged by a staff team who demonstrate their commitment to providing an outstanding service. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and mutually respectful. Pupils are encouraged to maintain contact with their families when staying overnight at the school. Care planning arrangements are effective, particularly in respect of health and welfare, which are excellent. There are good admission arrangements which ensure that the school is able to meet the needs of all its pupils.

Support for pupils to develop adult life skills is good. They are provided with an extensive range of clubs, programmes and activities to develop their independence. The residential unit is maintained to a good standard and adaptations and specialist equipment are abundant. There are sufficient specialist bathrooms and toilets to meet pupils' needs.

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The residential provision is well managed and staff are supported. Pupils' welfare is safeguarded and promoted by a well-trained and experienced staff team, although only 73% of staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Sound monitoring arrangements contribute to the development of welfare provision.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

Ensure that the receipt, storage, administration and recording of controlled drugs is undertaken in accordance with the school's policy and procedure (NMS 14.17).

- Ensure that all records relating to pupils' health needs are stored securely and remain confidential (NMS 3.3).
- Ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of care staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies (NMS 31.4).

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive about Hebden Green School. Many value the personal contact that is a strong feature of the school and the relationships they have with school staff. One parent summed up the response of many saying 'his teachers are like his extended family'. Under half of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Many questionnaires contained appreciative comments which recognise and value the high level of care, support and encouragement provided by the school. The inspection evidence also supports this view as most of the learner outcomes were found to be outstanding and the school's partnership work with parents and carers is excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hebden Green Community 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 36 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	29	81	4	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	86	3	8	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	72	8	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	69	7	19	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	26	72	6	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	69	7	19	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	61	9	25	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)	24	67	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	72	7	19	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	61	7	19	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	67	9	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	75	7	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	75	5	14	1	3	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 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

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 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>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.



5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hebden Green Community School, Winsford, CW7 4EJ

I am writing to thank you for making the inspectors feel so welcome when we visited your school. This letter is to tell you what we found out. Your parents and carers judge that Hebden Green is an outstanding school and I agree with them. The people who help you care about you a lot and everyone in school looks after you exceptionally well and keeps you safe.

I was very impressed by how keen you are to learn and how much you enjoy your lessons. The teaching in your school is good and I was pleased to see how many different activities there are for you to do. You make good progress in your work because your teachers and other staff know how to help you to do your best and they make learning interesting and fun. You are very considerate towards one another and it was obvious that you like to help when you can. I was delighted to see so many of you receive medals for your sporting activities, and how generously you applauded the success of other people. Your school is very good at giving you the chance to mix with people from other schools and take part in visits. Many of you really enjoy your boarding nights and have great fun with your friends when you stay after school.

Your school is outstanding because your headteacher and the other managers are excellent leaders and they are always trying to make the school better for you. I have asked them to check that each lesson you go to improves how much you know, and to make sure that your work is not too hard or too easy for you. You could help your teachers by letting them know if work is too easy or too hard for you. I am delighted that you have an outstanding school to go to which you enjoy so much. I hope that you continue to take pride in your school and keep trying hard.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Linda Clare

Lead Inspector

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