

Amwell View School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117684
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339046
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Dr Michael Farrell

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	2-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Farrington
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Liversage
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2007
School address	Station Road Stanstead Abbots Ware SG12 8EH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The majority of the time was spent observing learning; fourteen lessons and fourteen teachers were observed; and meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policies, data on pupils' progress, the school development plan and other documents and scrutinised 45 parent questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of the school's use of data to improve progress for pupils and to improve teaching
- attendance and the effectiveness of strategies to improve it
- the school's progress in its work as a specialist sports college.

Information about the school

Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College educates pupils with severe learning difficulties in East Hertfordshire. Some pupils have additional difficulties including sensory or physical impairment and autism. The school's specialist college status has been achieved since the previous inspection. It also has Investors in People, Healthy Schools, and Sport England awards.

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

Amwell View School offers outstanding provision. Among typical comments, one parent states, 'I would recommend this school to anyone'. Another says, 'The school provides an excellent experience for children of all abilities'. Fortright leadership and management drives the school forward and excellent school development planning gives a clear direction. Safeguarding procedures including those for child protection are underpinned by very clear policies that are acted upon and regular training keeps staff up to date. Very careful analysis of data relating to progress and development ensures all pupils have equal opportunity to do very well and helps improve teaching. Any differences in progress are successfully dealt with for example through booster classes. Excellent community cohesion, which is very well planned, monitored and evaluated, leads to a strong sense of community and belonging. The governing body, having experienced changes in personnel in the past two years, offers good support and challenge.

Excellent teaching has many strengths. Relationships are warm and positive; staff work as a coherent team; planning and assessment is of a very high standard and lessons are briskly paced and capture pupils' interests. Fluent signing and the very effective use of symbols enhance communication. The excellent curriculum, a strength of the school, provides a wealth of varied activities for learning and development. The school is a leader in its specialism of physical education where it has made excellent progress. Well-established cross-curricular strands bind the curriculum together, supporting outstanding outcomes. Numerous clubs at lunchtimes and after school enrich the curriculum. Excellent care, guidance and support in the welcoming ethos improves pupils' confidence and independence. Very thorough assessments are used to ensure pupils' excellent progress and development.

Outstanding partnerships with other services, such as the health services, ensure pupils' well-being. The school strives to improve its low attendance, due largely but not solely to medical reasons, leading to individual examples of great improvements, but strategies are not always rigorously monitored and evaluated. Pupils' attainments remain low throughout their schooling because of severe learning difficulties, but they make excellent progress and learn very well indeed owing to excellent teaching. Pupils feel safe and parents are confident of this. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles because of the great priority this is given. They behave very well influenced by very high expectations of behaviour, contribute fully to the community and enjoy what the school provides.

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Despite attendance being low, economic well-being is good because of outstanding progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and the excellent impact to self-esteem and confidence of the numerous opportunities for team work including with pupils from mainstream schools. Excellent Early Years Foundation Stage leadership ensures outstanding provision where children thrive and make excellent progress in the supportive atmosphere. Outstanding sixth form leadership promotes very hard work and great enjoyment leading to excellent outcomes for students. Since the previous inspection the school has achieved specialist sport college status, is keen to extend itself further and therefore has excellent capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attendance by rigorously monitoring and evaluating strategies to ensure that the most effective are used.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils' attainment on entering school is low, remaining so throughout their schooling because of their learning difficulties. However, individual pupils and groups of pupils including those with autism, boys and girls, and pupils from ethnic minorities learn outstandingly well and make excellent progress. They achieve outstandingly and enjoy school enormously. Pupils act safely and say they feel safe and parents endorse this. Behaviour is excellent and occasional challenging behaviour very well managed. Pupils respond particularly well to learning that is practical and involves movement. In an outstanding dance lesson for Year 11 pupils, excellent progress was made and pupils were eager to demonstrate key movements in different dances. This was because the skilful teacher's great enthusiasm spilled over and close teamwork with the teaching assistant ensured all pupils did their utmost to succeed. In an outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage session, children delighted in covering pictures with lentils, exploring tactile trays, and recognising events, making excellent progress in their sensory learning. This was because the nurturing environment so successfully balanced opportunities for independence with timely support.

Pupils eat healthily, take very active part in exercise and are very well encouraged to communicate including conveying how they feel. They develop a strong awareness of their surroundings and of the community because of the extensive opportunities to take part in events with others including pupils attending mainstream schools. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and the way pupils care for each other is impressive.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching, including assessment, is outstanding. That observed during the inspection ranged from good to excellent but was very predominantly outstanding. Teaching helps ensure pupils make excellent progress in learning. Among its many strengths are very clear planning and assessment ensuring work is pitched very well for pupils' learning; fluent and consistent staff signing and excellent use of symbols; and warm relationships between staff and pupils. Other strengths are the close working relationships between teachers and teaching assistants, and excellent and sensitive management of pupils' behaviour. Teaching enthuses pupils to do their very best, and resources including ICT are very well used.

The excellent curriculum is a strength of the school, offering rich and varied opportunities for learning and development from carefully planned day to day lessons to special events such as a dance festival. The school is a leader in curriculum development in its specialism of physical education and is always seeking to extend and improve what it offers. The school ensures the curriculum meets pupils' needs and modifies it as necessary. Numerous clubs at lunchtime and after school enrich school life. Cross curricular strands are very strong including literacy, numeracy and ICT ensuring curriculum coherence and outstanding outcomes.

Excellent care guidance and support is reflected in the warm and welcoming ethos which helps pupils develop confidence and independence. Pupils relate very well to staff. Progress is very carefully assessed and where more can be done, effective strategies are implemented to improve progress and development. The school works tirelessly to ensure partnership with other services provides the best support and

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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ensures pupils' well-being. It has done a great deal to improve attendance and there are individual examples of remarkable improvements, but strategies are not always rigorously monitored and evaluated.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

Clearly focused, enabling leadership and management provides a very clear direction for the school yet enables staff to use their own initiative to maintain very high standards leading to outstanding outcomes for pupils. The school knows itself very well, translating this into excellent school development planning. The governing body have experienced two years of change in their make up but this having passed, they provide good and improving support and challenge, being particularly strong in their oversight of safeguarding.

The school's very carefully monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and well-being helps ensure equal opportunities are successfully addressed. Any indication a pupil is not doing as well as expected is acted upon. Parents value the school greatly and are kept very well informed so that the school enjoys an honest and productive relationship with parents. Other partners too, including mainstream schools, are excellently engaged to benefit pupils and value what the school offers them. Consequently, excellently planned and evaluated community cohesion is very strong and leads to pupils being an important part of the community. In its first-rate provision leading to outstanding outcomes, the school offers excellent value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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

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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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress towards their learning goals and two year olds make excellent progress in their 'stepping stones'. Careful assessment when children enter school, together with the staff's very close knowledge of the children, ensures that work and play activities are very well pitched at a level that extends learning and development. The children thrive in the well-equipped, stimulating and welcoming environment. Older children are successfully encouraged in small groups and in free play to become more independent. Signing very effectively assists children's communication, and movement greatly aids learning. The broad, rich and very well considered curriculum fully meets requirements. Outstanding leadership and management includes excellent evaluation of the provision to ensure it continues to improve and staff work very closely together to benefit children.

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

Sixth form

In the outstandingly well led and managed sixth form, students thrive and make excellent progress, academically, personally and socially. Attendance is high and students are successful in gaining suitable examination qualifications. They respect and support each other and contribute fully to the school and wider community, for example working with children in the nursery. Very effective teaching includes using skillfully chosen activities that engage and motivate students because they are practical and relevant. The curriculum outstandingly meets students' needs and includes strong college links, regular contact with students from mainstream schools, and work experience. Excellent care, guidance and support includes very thorough and fully used assessments. Staff have high aspirations, work very closely as a team and organise activities very well. Safety is a key priority, parents are very fully involved, and resources very effectively used.

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

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
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

Views of parents and carers

Forty-five responses (just over 41%) were received from parents. They were almost unanimously appreciative of the school. All agreed their child enjoys school, is kept safe, enjoys a healthy life style, and that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. Several parents said they would like more speech therapy for their child. In other aspects very small numbers expressed negative views with no one area being of special concern. The highest number of concerns (4%) related to whether the school was managed effectively and whether it takes account of suggestions from parents. The inspectors found no evidence to support these negative views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Amwell View 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	83	6	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	78	9	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	71	11	27	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	61	15	37	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	33	80	6	15	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	71	11	27	0	0	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	76	9	22	0	0	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)	25	61	12	29	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	80	7	17	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	76	10	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	68	11	27	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	31	76	8	20	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	80	7	17	0	0	1	2

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

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:	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. ■ 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.

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.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amwell View School, Ware, SG12 8EH

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we recently inspected your school. You told us how much you enjoyed the many activities you are involved in.

There are many excellent things about the school. It is excellently managed. You make outstanding progress and develop extremely well. Your curriculum is excellent and teaching is first rate. You are cared for and supported outstandingly well.

There is one thing that could be improved and that is your attendance. I have asked the staff to look at the ways in which they can help you to do this and then check they are using the best ones.

I am confident you and your parents will do your best to help the school in this.

With every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell
Lead inspector

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