

Heltwate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110948
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	356837
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Elvin
Headteacher	Douglas Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 16 lessons and saw 14 teachers. Meetings were held with a group of parents and carers, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at various documents, including those policies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils, the school development plan and systems for tracking pupils' progress. Questionnaire returns for staff, pupils, and 36 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are different groups of pupils making equal progress in lessons during the current academic year?
- What impact are partnerships and links with parents and carers having on pupil outcomes to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and care guidance and support?
- What are the strengths in the promotion of equality of opportunity and safeguarding?

Information about the school

Heltwate School caters for pupils with mainly moderate and/or severe learning difficulties. A significant minority have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and a few have physical disabilities with complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all pupils come from Peterborough and a very few from neighbouring areas. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school has achieved the Inclusion Charter Mark, Health Promoting Schools status and the Financial Management Standard in Schools. There have been a number of changes to the accommodation since the last inspection. The numbers of pupils on roll has increased by 13% with a higher proportion of primary age pupils and of pupils with severe learning difficulties and more complex needs.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Heltwate school provides a good education for its pupils. Outstanding care, guidance and support have resulted in extremely good behaviour and have had a positive impact on pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well and this is reflected in the equally good progress which all pupils make, irrespective of their backgrounds, gender or complexity of their special educational needs. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent, reflecting typical views of parents and carers, wrote, 'This school has been the making of our son and (we) couldn't ask for anything more for our child.' Another wrote, 'My daughter has learned so much in two years because it is a very good school. I am glad my child goes there.'

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers set high expectations for learning, their relationships with pupils are excellent and teamwork with teaching assistants is strong. As a result, all pupils focus on their learning and make good progress in all subjects. On a few occasions when teaching is satisfactory, the pace of lessons slows and resources are not always used well enough. The curriculum continues to be good, as at the last inspection, with new developments planned, but not yet fully in place, to make it more creative across the school and to develop the 14 to 19 curriculum further. Good opportunities for pupils to engage in sport enable them to stay fit and healthy. Pupils also make healthy choices at meal times.

Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and this reflects the school's good procedures for safeguarding. Rigorous follow up in the case of very few absences and the strong promotion of attendance has led to above average attendance for nearly all pupils, reflecting their good enjoyment of school.

The school knows itself well. Strong team work between leaders at all levels under the purposeful direction of the headteacher has resulted in sustained improvements in recent years and the creation of a very warm and friendly ethos with high expectations for learning, recognised by the whole school community. The sharp focus on monitoring teaching and learning has led to accurate self-evaluation which is used well to set further priorities for improvement. These factors, together with good governance, reflect the school's good capacity for sustained improvement, which does not depend solely on one individual.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good by always delivering lessons in a brisk and lively manner and making better use of resources to support learning.

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- Fully implementing the priorities for developing the curriculum, identified in the school development plan, by July 2012.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

It is inappropriate to judge pupils' attainment against national norms because most have complex learning needs. Instead, judgements on pupils' achievement are based on their learning and progress. In lessons seen, all pupils made equally good progress, irrespective of their different aptitudes and abilities. Consequently, there was no difference in the learning and progress of those with additional and more complex special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder and severe physical disabilities, who made equally good progress. Nor were there any significant differences between the progress of girls and boys, or those at an early stage of learning English. The reason for this is that all staff work well as a team, making good use of practical resources and, where appropriate, using a variety of communication aids, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) well. This ensures that all pupils remain focused on their tasks and fully access learning at their level of need. For example, in a food technology lesson where all staff encouraged pupils to feel and choose different pastas, all pupils identified different types of pasta and knew that it changed in texture and consistency when it was cooked. They sustained high levels of concentration as teaching assistants used a range of strategies, such as signs and symbols, to ensure that all pupils progressed at the same rate. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make good progress, especially in literacy communication and social interaction skills. This builds up and is developed further so that, by the time pupils reach Key Stage 4, they are making good progress in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils make good progress towards their examination courses, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) in personal and social development and certificates of achievement in English, mathematics and science. They also make good progress in independent living skills and in work related learning.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and this is reflected in their successful transfer to sixth forms or colleges of further education. Pupils' excellent behaviour has a very positive impact on learning and progress as they try their best, listen carefully to others and take turns to answer questions. The few pupils with more challenging behaviour are quick to re-engage with learning and achieve their objectives because staff manage behaviour well. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through, for example, raising funds for one of their friends outside of school who had cancer. They also sold their home-made apple and blackcurrant jam and lavender bags at the Macmillan coffee morning where they acted as host for parents, carers and representatives of the community. All pupils support one another and collaborate very well together in lessons; as they move through the school, they grow in confidence and maturity. Pupils have many well-planned opportunities for reflection through, for example, during assembly, considering inspirational Irish people, such as Oscar Wilde, Bob Geldof, Bono and St Patrick and thinking how they could achieve. They reflected intently on the impact of the recent tsunami on the lives of the Japanese people. All pupils support one another and collaborate well together in lessons and, as they move through the school, they grow in confidence and maturity. They are deeply aware of other cultures and traditions, such as the customs and traditions of people in Afganistan and, through well-planned visits, the diversity of different world faiths.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

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.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' high expectations for learning and thorough knowledge of their pupils were used well in nearly all lessons to move pupils' learning forward and ensure good progress. Good use was made of resources such as the interactive whiteboard to display classroom rules for using the internet safely before pupils researched France and Afghanistan. Teachers make good use of assessment in planning lessons and ensure that progress is carefully tracked. In the lessons observed, work was always well matched to the different learning needs of all pupils and learning was greatly facilitated by very good support from teaching assistants. Brisk, lively teaching was nearly always seen but occasionally the pace slowed or resources were not always used well enough.

The curriculum is relevant to the needs of all pupils, with an emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. Good partnerships with local schools and colleges enhance pupils' learning and personal development through sporting activities, such as netball and cross-country running; the acquisition of life skills; and opportunities to learn horticulture. Learning is enriched through a wide range of educational visits, such as the residential trip to Ireland, and visitors to the school, such as the sports coach. Safety is promoted throughout the curriculum with, for example, opportunities to learn how to travel safely to school and how to use equipment safely in

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lessons. Further developments to the curriculum, to make it more creative and to extend 14 to 19 provision, identified in the school development plan are not fully implemented. The school provides a highly welcoming atmosphere for visitors who are greeted enthusiastically by pupils. Pupils' induction into school and transfer to other schools when they leave, are extremely smooth. Very good promotion and monitoring of attendance ensures above-average attendance for nearly all pupils. The school works very closely and successfully with therapists, support agencies, health professionals and parents and carers to enhance pupils' well-being, as seen in the support provided by the educational psychology service. In addition, the involvement of parents and carers in developing highly-effective procedures for promoting good behaviour has led to outstanding behaviour across the school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked hard and very successfully in building a strong team of senior leaders and middle managers who all share the same ambition for the school and who are determined to move the school forward. All staff reflect on their own practice and use this to improve provision and raise achievement for all pupils. Any form of discrimination is tackled extremely well and all pupils have full and equal chances of fulfilling their potential, as reflected in the equally good progress of all groups. The outcomes of systematic monitoring of teaching and learning have led to sharply-focused priorities for school development, some of which are not yet fully implemented. Good governance is reflected in the systematic monitoring of aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding practice, learning and the use of resources in lessons, through planned visits. The governing body consults parents, carers and pupils on important decisions, such as new appointments, and take their views into account. Good promotion of safeguarding is seen in the rigorous vetting procedures which exceed requirements, the promotion of procedures in all aspects of the schools' life, and in the implementation of related policies, such as the safe handling of pupils.

The school has carried out a full evaluation of the impact of its plans to promote community cohesion across the school and, as a result, pupils have a good appreciation and understanding of diversity locally, nationally and globally. This has impacted positively on their contribution to the community and in their cultural development. The school has good links with parents and carers, which are reflected in their strong support for the school and their willingness to respond to guidance in supporting their children's learning at home. Strong partnerships are promoted with other schools colleges and outside professionals for the benefit of pupils. Good use of resources to develop effective provision

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in the school continues to result in positive outcomes for pupils and ensures good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

An above average number of parents and carers returned their completed questionnaires, nearly all of whom expressed very strong support for the school. Only a very few individual concerns were raised relating to communication between home and school, and behaviour. The inspection evidence supports the very positive views of parents and carers. The inspection team judged behaviour as outstanding and found that the school's engagement with parents and carers is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heltwate 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 126 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	72	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	61	12	33	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	58	15	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	75	9	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	64	11	31	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	61	14	39	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)	22	61	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	61	13	36	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	67	11	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	69	11	31	0	0	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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 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.



16 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heltwate School, Peterborough, PE3 8RL

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We were very pleased to talk to you and to see you working so well together in your lessons. Your behaviour is excellent and we were also very pleased to see how thoughtful and caring you were about the dreadful effects of the tsunami on the lives of the Japanese people. You told us a lot about your school which helped me to write this report.

Yours is a good school. All staff provide excellent care and support for you. You have good opportunities to learn different things and the school is planning to develop more ways to make learning more fun. You always try to stay healthy and safe in school. You told us how safe you feel and we agree with you because the school is good at making sure you are safe. You really help others through fundraising and helping out at coffee mornings. You all make good progress in your learning because teaching is good. On a few occasions, lessons are a little slow or resources are not always used well enough to help you to learn better. Staff always know how well you are doing and use this to make sure you learn as well as each other. Therefore, you all have the same opportunity to make the same progress as others in school. The headteacher and his staff manage your school well and make sure there are good links with your parents, carers and other schools.

We have asked your school to work on just two things to make it even better for you.

Make sure all teaching is lively and includes good use of resources to help you.

Put in place the new opportunities for making learning more interesting.

You can help by continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Lead Inspector

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