

Springfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104495
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	324061
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Clare

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	76
Sixth form	0
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Harris
Headteacher	Mr J Parkes
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cawthorne Close Southdene Kirkby Knowsley Merseyside L32 3XQ

Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
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Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Springfield School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A small number of the school's population has additional autistic spectrum conditions. A few pupils, because of their disabilities, also display challenging behaviour. The nature of pupils' difficulties means they are working well below national expectations. Pupils are all of White British heritage. A higher than average proportion is entitled to free school meals.

The school has achieved Healthy Schools, Activemark, Sportsmark, Eco-Schools Bronze, Sports Partnership and International Schools awards. It holds the Merseyside Recognition of Quality Award for Education Business Links and has achieved Investors in People Award and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark. The school is also a Registered Specialist ICT school and Special Educational Needs Technology Centre. The school is in federation with a neighbouring special school and is moving towards amalgamation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Springfield is an outstanding school. Parents hold it in high esteem and say that their children are happy, gain great confidence and make very good progress there. Progress is outstanding in literacy, numeracy and science-based learning because of the quality of assessment undertaken and the high standard of teaching and support that pupils receive. Assessments show that both boys and girls make equally outstanding progress, as do pupils of all abilities. By the end of Year 11 pupils show confidence in their work and many undertake nationally accredited courses.

Teaching is a particular strength of the school, with outstanding teaching and high-quality support staff promoting pupils' learning most effectively. Teachers are very experienced and skilled in planning programmes to stretch pupils and to develop their abilities. The curriculum is outstanding. It meets individual needs and external requirements very well. Learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides an outstanding basis for further development, although outdoor play opportunities are sometimes limited. The school supports pupils of all levels of ability very well through its flexible grouping in 'access', lower and upper school departments together with a post-16 group. Curricular activities are varied, motivate pupils well and provide very good levels of challenge. As a result, lessons are fun, interesting and exciting.

Personal development is outstanding. Pupils have an extremely good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and many greatly enjoy physical activities. They feel especially safe, secure and valued in school, and have great confidence that they can rely on staff for support when needed. Attendance is good. Pupils show much support for one another and the elected school council members accept their responsibilities very well. Pupils are very happy and gain a great deal of enjoyment from all that the school has to offer.

All staff in the school provide high levels of care, encouragement and support for pupils and relationships are outstanding. The school very carefully identifies the needs of each pupil on entry and uses its ongoing records to set precise learning targets. Systems to check pupils' progress are exemplary. Extensive links with other schools, businesses and the local colleges help pupils to work effectively in the local community. Work related learning extends this particularly well for older pupils, contributing most positively to their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has sustained and built on the many strengths identified at the last inspection. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and he and the senior management team are positive leaders who are committed to further school improvement. The governing body provides very effective challenge and support. The school knows itself very well and, as a consequence, its self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The planning groups with the school's federation partner are providing impetus for change and development. These have already created exciting curricular opportunities for pupils. Springfield has an outstanding capacity to improve further and provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Post-16 students achieve very highly and enjoy their learning greatly as a result of relevant and interesting activities that build extremely successfully upon their previous knowledge and understanding. Students make very good progress in response to highly effective teaching, personalised learning programmes and excellent leadership. Opportunities to gain accreditation are matched very closely to students' individual needs. These cover a good range of vocational

qualifications accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Students are increasingly working with their peers from the federated partner school on entry level courses and together the schools are piloting the new Foundation Learning Tier diploma. An extensive and high-quality programme of enrichment activities promotes students' personal development, confidence and self-esteem very effectively. Outstanding links with colleges and local businesses provide a wealth of opportunities which extend knowledge and enterprise skills very successfully. These skills, together with enhanced information and communication technology (ICT) skills, do much to ensure that students are as independent and well prepared for life after school as possible. Students are exceptionally well cared for and supported and make outstanding progress in their personal development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has made a very good start to introducing Early Years Foundation Stage provision this year and recognises that this is a developing area. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile is being adapted very well to meet the specific needs of children. Staff who work with these groups are trained fully for the age range and for the complexity of children's needs. Learning is very well organised and planned with a very good balance between opportunities for independent and guided learning. Record keeping and target-setting are thorough and expectations high. The learning environment is secure, physically comfortable and incorporates excellent indoor play facilities. The outside play areas are small and equipment is stored away in cold weather, limiting opportunities for children to explore and play. Links between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are very well thought out with joint activities so that children transfer from one stage to the next with ease. Staff have very strong links with parents and carers. This helps staff to ascertain children's needs and interests and to plan learning accordingly. Staff routinely share information so that children's individual needs are extremely well known to all who work with them. As a result, children's welfare and their personal development are promoted very effectively and are outstanding. Effective leadership and management ensure that all staff work hard to improve and develop the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage for outdoor play.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points in literacy, numeracy and science-based learning, despite their severe, profound and complex learning difficulties. Throughout the school pupils continue to improve their communication and personal skills and parents greatly appreciate this. As they get older, many students extend these communication skills and become more confident, independent and self-aware. Pupils with multisensory impairment make excellent progress when they work in the sensory room on well managed programmes that stimulate and heighten their senses. Those in specific education groups where the 'whole child' is catered for make very good gains in their physical development and readiness for learning, owing to its very structured approach. Pupils' individual targets are highly personalised and challenging, and their needs individually assessed and supported very well. This helps to ensure that no group or individual fares less well than any other. Assessments

show boys and girls make equally outstanding progress, as do pupils of differing levels of attainment. Targets for the whole school show challenge and are met. Older students complete external accreditation at appropriate levels and all have access to vocational skills at college, in school or with the school's federated partner school. Accreditation at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 includes a range of ASDAN vocational certificates and entry level awards. Pupils' effort and achievement are reinforced at every opportunity in class and the school community and this ensures that high achievement and very good progress are sustained.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils show great enjoyment in response to music and physical activities in lessons and this helps to keep them motivated in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy school very much, feel safe and have no fear of bullying. The Healthy Schools initiative ensures that they have a thorough understanding of healthy lifestyles and have fruit snacks regularly. The school promotes swimming for everyone in Year 8, and impressively a small number of pupils have been selected to attend the special Olympic trials for the boccia team. The complexity of some pupils' medical needs results in their absence from school being slightly higher than the national average but they come to school whenever they can. Attendance is good overall. Pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and they are thoughtful and well mannered. They accept their responsibilities with great pride, for example, participating in community sports activities and representing the local authority on the Youth Parliament. Pupils try hard, their achievements are actively celebrated and, as a consequence, this raises self-esteem. They are prepared outstandingly well for the future and team enterprise projects successfully develop financial awareness. The elected school council members regularly put their decision making skills into practice to improve their school environment. They know that their suggestions are keenly listened to and that they can help shape the future for others. Pupils' outstanding personal development is readily seen in the way in which they develop insights into their own circumstances and show great concern and understanding of other pupils' problems.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. This is because, throughout the school, teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly and are skilled in using interactive technology to make learning stimulating. Up-to-date records are used to set precise learning and personal development targets and so work is matched extremely well to every pupil's needs. Pupils are assigned to teaching groups according to their needs and a range of teaching styles are routinely employed to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Teaching assistants work very closely alongside teaching staff. They are vital to the success of teaching at all levels. Resources that appeal to pupils' senses are used to very good effect to bring learning to life and fun to lessons. Where necessary, signing and switches are used effectively to support pupils' communication. Teachers have high expectations and identify precise learning objectives for the next steps in learning for each pupil. They keep lessons moving on at a very good pace with regular changes of task, but also allow pupils plenty of time to explore and consolidate learning. Pupils are involved in evaluating their learning as much as they can. Teachers regularly remind them what they are expected to learn in the lesson, and ask how successful they think they

have been. In the teaching of pupils with multisensory impairment, all staff show an exceptional level of sensitivity to pupils' feelings and needs. Pupils with challenging behaviour are managed very well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well planned to meet both Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum requirements, ensuring entitlement and flexibility. Its emphasis on personalised learning is very closely matched to the needs, capabilities and interests of all pupils. Music and singing, art, ICT and physical education are used very effectively to support learning across all subject areas. ICT is a particular strength. The school has developed an excellent curriculum specifically for pupils with multisensory impairments. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), signing and speech therapies are used interchangeably to support and develop pupils' communication skills. For younger pupils the curriculum is very good because of its strong focus on establishing their ability to relate to and communicate with others. Older pupils pursue a good range of accredited courses in school and at college. A careers adviser provides very helpful guidance for all secondary age pupils. Work related experience at many levels is integral to individual programmes in the upper school and at post-16. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to experience and participate in the performing arts, their experience enriched by visiting artists and musicians. There is an exceptionally strong emphasis on personal, social and health education (PSHE). In the words of a senior manager, 'We live PSHE,' and there is abundant evidence of this in practice. A good range of additional lunchtime activities, educational visits outside school, sporting opportunities and links with other schools and colleges supports a multi-faceted curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The consistent and sensitive management of pupils who find it difficult to concentrate is exemplary. The school has thorough procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe. Risks are carefully assessed and suitable action is taken to minimise them. The arrangements for child protection are rigorous and are reviewed regularly. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. Support staff are valued and their outstanding contribution is central to meeting individual pupils' care needs. Lunchtime is used very effectively to promote social development and healthy lifestyles. Staff know and accommodate pupils' specific dietary or medical needs very well. Lunchtime supervisors voluntarily enhance their own skills, attending courses to learn how to develop pupils' communication skills. The detailed education, personal care and behaviour plans are reflected closely in classroom practice and contribute significantly to pupils' progress and personal development. Assessment is thorough and data is used consistently well. Pupils receive constant feedback about how well they are doing and very detailed information is kept to track their progress. Additional personal support is offered to pupils and their families through very close and effective home–school liaison.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is very sharply focused on improving the school and since the last inspection he has developed a very effective group of senior leaders for this purpose. Together they

provide outstanding direction for the school's work. There is a strong commitment by all staff to the school and the vision for school excellence is widely understood and shared. Monitoring is thorough. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers have a very good understanding of how the school may develop further and of areas needing improvement. Department leaders use assessment information very effectively to inform planning and analyse data. For example, identifying underlying reasons for variations in science results has resulted in the more accurate evaluation of pupils' progress in that subject. The inclusion of a business manager on the leadership team has been a significant factor in the school's recent acquisition of its financial quality mark. Teamwork among staff is excellent, and wide-ranging professional development opportunities extend the skills of all. Curriculum leaders monitor subject development very well. Community cohesion is extremely strong and the school has a number of international partnerships through which pupils develop excellent understanding of alternative lifestyles and cultures. Under the leadership of a very experienced chair of governors, the outgoing governing body have made a strong contribution to the school's effectiveness and remain fully committed to the principles of federation. While planning for the future, the school's headteacher and staff keep their current pupils to the fore and remain determined to provide them with the best possible quality of education.

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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	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to say a very big 'thank you' for making me feel so welcome when I inspected your school. I really enjoyed meeting you and now I am writing to tell you what I found out.

Springfield is an outstanding school and I could see why your parents and carers are so pleased with how much it helps you. All the staff, whatever their job in school, clearly care about every one of you and look after you very well.

I was very impressed by how keen you are to learn and how much you enjoy your lessons. The teaching in your school is outstanding and there are many different activities for you to do. You make very good progress in your work because your teachers and support 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 good to see that you take responsibility more and more as you get older. The school council represents you very well. It was a privilege to be in assembly when, after all of the celebrations and certificates, some of you led prayers, sang or took the 'good-bye' responsibility in front of the whole school. Your school is very good at giving you the chance to try different kinds of work and join in with pupils from other schools and colleges. I was very pleased to see how many of you take part in visits and activities outside school.

Your school is outstanding because your headteacher and the other managers are very good leaders and they are always trying to make the school better for you. I have asked them to see if they can make the outdoor play areas more exciting and interesting for the youngest children so that they can use them more often.

I am delighted that you have such a good school to go to which you enjoy so much. I hope that you continue to take pride in your school and keep trying hard.