

The Russett School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111506
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	356928
Inspection dates	11–12 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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	88
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
School address	Middlehurst Avenue Weaverham, Northwich Cheshire CW8 3BW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, teaching staff, and the school's senior leadership team. The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at teachers' planning for lessons, school leaders' development plans and samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also took into account the views of 26 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

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

- The progress of pupils across the key stages.
- Whether the attendance of pupils is good enough.
- The quality of the health, safety and welfare documentation and the associated systems.
- Whether the governing body is effective in supporting the headteacher.

Information about the school

The Russett School and Cheshire Multi-Sensory Impairment Unit provides for children and students who have severe or profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A significant number of the young people who attend the school have conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders, challenging behaviours and multi-sensory impairment; all have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come from across the county of Cheshire and beyond. Overall there are more boys than girls and approximately one-third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A very small number of individuals are from minority ethnic backgrounds and an even smaller number are in the care of the local authority. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to the school leadership team, including the appointment of a new headteacher. The school has achieved Healthy School status.

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

The Russett School and Cheshire Multi Sensory Impairment Unit is a good school which provides a good standard of care, guidance and support. This ensures that pupils' behavioural, medical and learning needs are successfully met and enables them to make good progress overall both personally and academically. Parents' and carers' views are reflected well in the comment: 'My child is like a different person since he attended this school. He is now happy and his behaviour is much better.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure the quality of provision necessary for them to do so. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and rigorous and findings are acted upon to good effect. The school's strength is its ability to recognise and support the needs of all pupils. This ensures barriers to learning are minimised. Since the last inspection, the school has significantly improved many aspects of its performance, such as ensuring pupils' overall progress is now effectively tracked and monitored, and creating opportunities for best practice in teaching to be shared. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve further under current leadership.

Pupils grow in confidence as they move through school. The majority say they enjoy school and are clear about how to stay healthy. Behaviour is good both within and outside the classroom. Pupils say they feel safe. Attendance is rising and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Strong links with outside agencies have been developed which support pupils' learning and development significantly. This, coupled with a newly introduced work experience programme, helps to ensure pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education or training. Pupils have an understanding of the local community; however, links to promote their awareness of life in a multi-ethnic society are limited.

Teaching is good in the majority of classrooms and is based on a clear assessment of pupils' learning needs. However in a small number of classrooms the setting of academic targets for individuals and groups of pupils is insufficiently rigorous and as a result progress for some pupils slows. The curriculum is personalised to meet the needs of individual learners well in the main school and is exceptionally well organised in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Students leaving the sixth form are satisfactorily prepared for their transition to a range of different settings. However, the development of individual portfolios of evidence reflecting learning and achievement in the sixth form is at an early stage.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the pace of learning in a minority of lessons by ensuring that academic targets more accurately match pupils' needs.
- Within the sixth form develop an accurate record of students' learning and achievement in order to better support students' transition to their next stage of education or training.
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When pupils join the school the levels at which they are working are typically much lower than those expected for their age. Some pupils also need to develop the skills needed for good learning, for example sitting down when required and listening carefully. Pupils respond positively to their individual learning programmes. These enable pupils' learning and achievement to be consistent across the curriculum. This was illustrated in a lesson for a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The aim of the lesson was to give pupils the opportunity to experience South American culture and music. Pupils enthusiastically responded to the images and music of the region, showing a high level of appreciation. Individual tasks, tailored exceptionally well to their needs demonstrated this well. Their involvement in the evaluation of their learning was skillfully undertaken and showed clearly their progress towards individual targets. Overall, pupils across the main school are making good progress, including in English, mathematics and science. However, students in the sixth form make only satisfactory progress overall and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress against challenging targets.

Pupils leave Key Stage 4 with as many qualifications and accreditations as possible. Last year's school leavers received accreditation in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Regardless of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, all groups of pupils, including those who are looked after by the local authority, progress at similar rates as they move up through the school.

Pupils feel safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. Most clearly enjoy school. As one pupil commented, 'Coming to school is brilliant. I enjoy seeing my friends every day.' Many pupils recognise the importance of eating healthy meals and have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils of all abilities enjoy the sporting opportunities offered and appreciate the part this plays in a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make a good contribution to the community within and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, pupils are frequently involved in fundraising activities, including most recently a shoe box appeal to support elderly people. Pupils' good overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take care of the environment. However, they do not yet have a sufficiently good awareness of communities beyond those represented in the immediate locality.

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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	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Most teachers use assessment information effectively to set achievable targets for pupils and plan lessons conscientiously. In the majority of lessons, good attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of pupils within the class. However in a minority of lessons learning opportunities do not match pupils' needs sufficiently well. This is because, on these occasions, targets set are not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able. As a result, learning and progress for some pupils slows and hence teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory overall. In most lessons, support staff are well deployed and work closely and effectively with teachers to support the needs of all learners. Behaviour is good in lessons despite the high levels of need of some pupils. This is due to teachers' high expectations, good strategies for managing behaviour, and strong relationships, which ensure that pupils engage with learning.

The curriculum is well organised and is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Residential visits to a variety of locations help to develop pupils' independence. For example, a recent trip to an outdoor pursuits centre was described by pupils as, 'Brilliant'. The range of academic accreditation offered to pupils is good in the main school but only satisfactory in the sixth form. The quality of work experience and college placements is currently satisfactory, but is improving strongly

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under current leadership. The curriculum offers pupils good opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Planned links between subject areas are improving, enabling pupils to apply their skills in different contexts.

As a result of good care, guidance and support, pupils feel there is always someone who will listen and help. A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when pupils arrive at the school, which is then used to target support effectively. Particularly vulnerable pupils are well supported and this is helped by good links with many outside agencies. The school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils, including those with life-limiting conditions attend school as often as they are able. Overall attendance has fluctuated in the past and is largely dependent on the numbers of pupils with a high level of medical need. It is currently rising rapidly as a result of strong links with the education welfare service and health care professionals. Transition arrangements are securely in place and are well supported by partnerships with 'Connexions' advisors.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The visionary leadership of the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher is moving the school forward well and ensuring good outcomes for pupils. Subject leaders' expertise is developing well and their work is having an increasing impact on provision and pupils' progress. Strong partnerships forged with outside agencies contribute well to driving improvement further. The school's governing body has implemented secure procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils. Its members offer a good level of support to the school and challenge to senior leaders. Documents, such as policies, and procedures, ensure all safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of a good standard. The strength and quality of these procedures mean that any safeguarding issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively by senior leaders. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is an inclusive community. As a result, systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within school are of a good standard and the school works hard and successfully to eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils.

Leaders are beginning to build successful links with the local community. For example, coffee mornings for parents and carers and members of the local community and a playgroup are hosted in the school. However, there are too few links to other communities to improve and develop pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. The school makes great efforts to engage parents and carers. The work of school staff ensures they are kept well informed about their child's successes. Parent and carer education programmes and attendance diary links with home are in place and as a result, parents

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and carers appreciate the ongoing work of the school. The school ensures good outcomes for pupils, many of whom have significant needs. It does this on a well controlled budget and provides 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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop excellent links with the parents and carers of children before they start school. As a result, children joining the unit get off to an outstanding start. They settle into their routines well because of the exceptionally high quality of care, guidance and support for their personal and social development. They clearly feel very safe and secure in the setting. Excellent partnerships with the on-site children's therapy team ensure that children are very well supported. As a result of highly personalised learning opportunities within a happy learning environment, pupils make excellent progress from their individual starting points. Whilst staff are highly committed to ensuring pupils have opportunities to experience outdoor play, outdoor provision does not yet fully mirror the exceptional indoor learning opportunities. Staff are aware of this and plans are in place to develop this area further.

The Early Years Foundation Stage has an excellent leader who does everything in her power to ensure children access a high quality learning environment no matter what their level of need. Teaching is excellent. Tasks are exceptionally well adapted to children's ages and abilities, because all staff use assessment information effectively to plan learning experiences. Children's progress is charted well through excellent records of each child's learning journey which are shared with parents and carers. Leaders' self-evaluation is excellent and identifies clearly what the setting needs to do to build further on its considerable successes.

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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

The leadership and management of the sixth form have changed considerably since the last inspection. Much of this change is very recent and the impact is not yet fully measurable. However, current senior leaders have clear plans for future improvements to outcomes for students and are aware of the unit's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, sixth form students are currently making satisfactory progress, both socially and emotionally, and academically. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and contribute to students' success in achieving a range of accreditations. These include the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Oxford and Cambridge and RSA (OCR) life and living courses. The broad and increasingly relevant curriculum ensures that satisfactory attention is given to students' literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their understanding of healthy living. Students gain experience in attending college and through work placements, helping them to develop into confident, mature young people. Relationships between adults and students are strong and this ensures that the students know they are valued. The newly introduced transition programme ensures that students are satisfactorily prepared to move on from school to a variety of destinations. However, records of students' achievement do not yet fully reflect their range of learning and skills and, as a result, only offer limited support to their transition to further education or the workplace.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of responses to the Ofsted questionnaires were positive and supported the work of the school. One parent or carer contacted the inspection team raising some past concerns. The lead inspector investigated the issue raised and was

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satisfied that previous practice that might have given rise to concern no longer took place under the current leadership and management of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Russett 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 88 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	77	6	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	88	3	12	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	65	8	31	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	65	9	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	77	5	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	65	9	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	62	9	35	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)	15	58	10	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	73	6	23	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	69	7	27	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	69	7	27	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	62	9	35	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	81	4	15	1	4	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.



13 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Russett School, Northwich, CW8 3BW

Thank you all for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. A special thanks to those of you who came to meet with us and took the time to tell us about your school.

We agree with those of you who told us your school is good. These are the things we think your school does especially well. It:

- ensures everyone is welcomed into school and is given help and support to help them learn
- makes sure you all have a good understanding of how to keep safe and be healthy
- helps many of you to understand how important it is to manage your feelings and behaviour so that you make the right choices.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your school to:

- make sure that work in lessons is just hard enough for everyone
- ensure that those of you in the sixth form have records of achievement that show how much you have learnt
- give you more opportunities to experience other cultures to help you to get a better understanding of how other people live their lives.

We wish you all well for the future, and hope you continue to work as hard and enjoy school as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely,

Marian Thomas
Lead Inspector

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