

Bleasdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119861
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379898
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Hilary Ward

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	24
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	2
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Greenwell
Headteacher	Kairen Dexter
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2009
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Boarding provision	BLeasdale School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC058077
Social care inspector	Stephen Trainor



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Introduction

Inspection team

Hilary Ward

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eight lessons were observed taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, with school and residential staff, nurses and therapists. The school's work was observed and documentation provided by the school was scrutinised, including pupil profiles, teachers' planning documents, pupil assessments, safeguarding and medical administration information. The inspectors reviewed the information on the 14 parent and carer questionnaires returned.

Information about the school

Bleasdale School is a small day and residential special school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils often have significant health problems which can lead to long periods of absence from school. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Currently, all pupils are of white British heritage. One child is looked after by the local authority. At the time of the inspection there were five children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, some of whom attend part-time. The two students in the sixth form are taught with Key Stage 4 pupils in the 14-19 department.

The school has a number of awards including Active Sports Mark, Healthy Schools Flagship Status, Investors in People and Learning Excellence Awards for Inclusive Rebound Therapy, Growing Together for Health and Leisure and Innovative Practice for Inclusive Play.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Bleasdale is an outstanding school which has continued to build on its previous outstanding inspection findings, as a school which not only cares exceptionally well for its pupils, but also ensures that all make the maximum progress they can. In this small school, individual pupils' needs in all areas of their development are understood and planned for extremely well.
- Achievement is excellent. In response to teaching that is mainly outstanding and never less than good, pupils make exceptional progress given their very low starting points. Teachers, teaching assistants, residential support workers and other professionals form highly effective teams that enable pupils to reach ambitious targets. The Early Years Foundation Stage has been developed since the last inspection and ensures an excellent start in all areas of children's development. The sixth form is outstanding and prepares students exceptionally well for their move to adult services.
- Teachers and their teams assess pupils' needs rigorously. The new senior leaders use these data well as part of their effective leadership of teaching. As a result, there is an accurate picture of the priority areas for learning for individual pupils. Currently, the use of this information is not fully exploited by staff in their planning. Nevertheless, staff meet pupils' needs exceptionally well because they incorporate the targets from their individual education plans into all lessons. Lesson plans make it very clear how different topics and activities are to be taught, but teachers do not always make it so consistently clear what each pupil is expected to learn about the subject.
- Parents and carers feel very involved and well informed about the progress their children are making. They are confident that their children are safe and secure and the school's partnership with other agencies ensures that their medical and therapeutic needs are met exceptionally well. Boarding provision has been outstanding at all inspections over the last few years and was found to be outstanding at this inspection.
- The senior leadership team has changed since the last inspection. Together with the staff and governing body they have created a very purposeful and aspirational environment. Extremely effective management of the school's performance has led to significant improvements in a number of areas, including the development of

partnerships with other providers to create inclusion opportunities. Changes have been made to the way in which residential staff are deployed to ensure consistent management of pupils across school and residence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching even further by:
 - incorporating the new analysis of tracking data into lesson plans to focus teaching even more effectively in areas identified for improvement for individual pupils
 - identifying more consistently what pupils are expected to learn from the subject matter of each lesson.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In the extremely supportive environment of Bleasdale School, pupils' achievement is outstanding. The responses from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire show that they too feel their children are achieving outstandingly well. As one parent put it 'My child thrives at this school.' Due to the extent of pupils' special educational needs, children enter the school at very low starting points. They make excellent progress. Even the smallest steps of progress are a major achievement, such as a pupil seen to have great fun painting his face instead of his tray and knowing that it was a little bit naughty. Staff make extremely effective use of assessment tools to determine pupils' next steps and to set challenging targets in their individual education plans. The proportion of pupils successfully achieving their targets is very high.

Throughout their time in school learning is very effective in lessons because an emphasis is placed on developing the early stages of communication. This links into all aspects of learning so that pupils can begin to express their needs and wishes and make simple choices. The focus on communication, through the use of a range of innovative strategies, continues through the school so that by the time they leave, pupils are better able to take control over their own lives. Relationships between pupils and staff are very strong and respectful. Pupils respond well to the staff who support them and encourage them to try new things and to complete tasks. Staff are extremely skilled at meeting pupils' mobility and health needs with little disruption to their learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children progress very well because they learn through activity. They enjoy games when learning to recognise numbers, signs and symbols. They enjoy using the interactive whiteboard and respond to the movement and sounds they create when they press the touchscreen. They explore their senses imaginatively by feeling different materials, listening to and playing different instruments. Some begin to make and imitate vocal sounds. They make an excellent start in all aspects of their learning and personal development.

At Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 (sixth form) department, students continue to extend their skills and confidence through programmes that promote their independence and allow them to sample different vocational skills. All students enjoy work experience, often on site but sometimes with other providers such as garden centres and shops. They enjoy links with

the local college and all students leave school with some form of external accreditation and exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Partnerships have been developed with the local community, with playgroups, primary and special schools and with the high school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these inclusion opportunities and develop a spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding and involvement in the wider world, which might otherwise be difficult in such a small school.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are extremely skilled at finding ways to engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. Teachers and support workers know individual pupils very well and these excellent relationships help them to plan lessons which will engage their interest and help them to learn. Residential staff also work in school. This ensures that staff form highly effective teams so that information is shared and consistent approaches to learning take place across both settings. Improved analysis of pupils' performance is providing more specific information on pupils' progress. As yet, this is not fully exploited by teachers when planning lessons. Nevertheless, teachers set challenging targets in pupils' individual education plans to ensure that all strive to move forward step by step. Lessons are structured well to incorporate these targets and ensure a focus on communication. Plans make it clear what the overall theme is but are sometimes less specific about exactly what it is hoped each pupil will learn in the subject matter of the lesson. Parents and carers share the view of the outstanding teaching. 'The staff are enthusiastic, motivated and provide stimulating lessons' was a typical comment.

Many of the pupils have sensory disabilities in addition to their medical needs. Staff are innovative in providing imaginative multi-sensory experiences which enable them to participate in all aspects of the curriculum. For example, in a lesson on Wordsworth's poem 'Daffodils', older pupils got a sense of the meaning of the poem by feeling cotton wool 'clouds' and smelling the perfume which staff had put on silk flowers. Teachers successfully incorporate spiritual, social, moral and cultural elements into all aspects of the curriculum, often by using community facilities and their links with other providers.

Pupils' personal development and their welfare needs are exceptionally well supported by the attention paid to their mobility and nursing needs throughout the day in both school and residence. Teachers find ways of incorporating therapy programmes into lessons so that time is used very effectively. Teachers are supported to develop their skills through their continuing professional development programme and at each Key Stage teachers adapt the excellent curriculum to offer rich experiences which are age-appropriate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils at Bleasdale School feel very safe and happy. In the questionnaires returned, all parents and carers expressed their confidence in the school's ability to keep their child safe. In view of the extent of pupils' disability and special educational needs, behaviour does not present problems. Nevertheless, the school has trained some staff to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour which might occur from time to time. Parents, carers and staff are adamant that there is no bullying. Staff encourage pupils to develop their personalities and express their wishes so that they can say 'no' if they do not like or want to do something. However, pupils are also encouraged to move out of their comfort zones and try new things such as riding round the grounds on the specially adapted bikes and using the trampoline at

the high school, where the mainstream pupils have been taught rebound therapy techniques to use with Bleasdale pupils. Staff are realistic about their responsibilities in safeguarding pupils since most are unlikely to be able to develop a meaningful understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Within the supportive framework of familiar routines and excellent staff to pupil relationships, pupils respond exceptionally well to the secure environment that surrounds them

Leadership and Management

The new senior leadership team has most successfully built on previous outstanding inspection findings, particularly in the quality of teaching and use of assessment. This has raised achievement for pupils. Areas for improvement have been promptly identified and addressed. For example, effective monitoring of teaching has led to changes in staffing and teaching time. Performance management and professional development are correctly aimed at meeting the specific needs of the school and its pupils. Senior leaders track each pupil's progress from their starting points more robustly and are able to interrogate the data to identify subjects and aspects for development. This information is not yet shared with teachers so that they can plan individual programmes even more efficiently, although this is a planned next step.

The curriculum at all Key Stages is outstanding. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very effectively incorporated into all lessons and extended day activities. There were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the time of the last inspection but this now makes an outstanding contribution to the provision offered by the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is extremely well adapted to ensure that children can make a confident start on the very early learning steps of their education. The sixth-form curriculum offers outstanding opportunities to develop the independence and life skills of the young people preparing for adult life. The boarding provision is outstanding and pupils move seamlessly between school and residence due to the excellent collaborative working of staff and the perceptive management overview.

The school is outward-looking and uses the partnerships it has developed with other settings, not only to enhance the curriculum, but also to moderate assessments with colleagues from other schools, when Bleasdale staff are often regarded as lead practitioners. Partnerships with other agencies, such as health and social care services, ensure that all of the pupils' complex therapeutic and nursing needs are met exceptionally well. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the efforts made to ensure that they are informed thoroughly about their child's learning and personal development, through home-school books, texts, e-mails, phone calls and reviews. Contact with parents and carers by both school and residential staff is frequent.

Equality of opportunity is outstanding. Throughout their time in school and residence every pupil is valued and their individual needs respected. Arrangements for safeguarding fully meet requirements with examples of rigorous practice. The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to school improvement. Together with senior leaders and all staff, governors share a very clear vision for the future of the school. The school continues to build on its many successes and all work as a team to collectively demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve the school even further.

Residential provision

The quality of residential provision is outstanding. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed to further improve the already outstanding practice which fully meets with the requirements of Residential Special Schools' National Minimum Standards. The experience of boarding and the high quality of care makes an exceptional impact on the educational, personal, social and cultural development of pupils. There are excellent relationships between pupils and the teams of staff who look after them and this allows pupils to fulfil their potential.

The highly personalised planning and practice demonstrates a commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity. Pupils behave very well and grow in confidence through their boarding experience, making sustained progress socially and educationally. Pupils fully enjoy their boarding experience and take every opportunity to participate in a range of stimulating extra-curricular and leisure activities matched to their ages, interests and needs. Targets are set for each pupil which are shared with school and support pupils' academic and personal progress. Staff are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support pupils and their high aspirations lead to excellent progress.

There is an extremely sensitive and well-designed induction process. Health care arrangements are highly effective in promoting pupils' physical and emotional health. Detailed health plans are supported by qualified nursing staff. Staff place the well-being of individual pupils at the centre of their practice. Placement and care plans are well focused, detailed and rigorously implemented.

Safeguarding practices are outstanding and there is excellent work with key agencies. There are thorough vetting procedures for recruiting staff, all of whom are fully trained in child protection at the appropriate level. The safety and welfare of pupils is of paramount importance, sitting at the very heart of staff practice. Care plans identify the risks and protective factors for individual pupils. Regular monitoring and review of plans support constant improvement. The school provides a secure and very safe environment for young people. Health and safety policies and procedures are robust and executed consistently to a high standard. Managers have considered all potential hazards and run regular and exhaustive checks. Fire precautions and fire safety are particularly well managed. Boarding accommodation and facilities are to a high standard; maintenance and servicing is prompt and effectively supports a safe whole-school environment.

The boarding provision is led and managed very well. Accurate and insightful self-evaluation drives improvement, informed by members of the governing body who monitor on a regular basis. The management team clearly demonstrates the capacity for continuous improvement. The availability of high quality data from the school's monitoring and quality assurance systems informs where future improvements can be made. There is a comprehensive development plan.

Staff are deployed in sufficient numbers to support pupils' specific needs but some staff are not aware of recent changes to inspection frameworks. Their enthusiasm and skills make the whole school environment an extremely caring and positive place for pupils. There are consistently very positive views from parents and carers about the quality of the boarding experience. Communication between education, nursing and social care staff, parents and carers and other partners is excellent.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Area for improvement

- Ensure that training keeps all levels of staff up to date with professional, legal and practice developments (NMS 19.1)

These are the grades for the boarding provision/These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	1
Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care	1
Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety	1
Leadership and management of boarding/Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bleasdale School, Silverdale, Carnforth, LA5 0RG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. I really enjoyed seeing what you were doing in school and my colleague, Steve, joined you in some of your activities in residence. Your parents and carers were able to let us know that they are very glad you go to Bleasdale School. They think it keeps you safe and happy and meets your needs exceptionally well.

We agree with them. We think your school is outstanding. Your teachers, support assistants and care staff use their imagination to come up with interesting and exciting ways to help you learn. They offer exciting activities in school and in residence so that you learn in many different ways. We think you are cared for exceptionally well by all the people who meet your different needs. They respect your different personalities and you feel you can trust them.

Your headteacher and her staff are constantly looking for ways to make things even better for you. We have asked them to be very clear about what they want each of you to learn in every lesson and to make even more use of their assessments when planning your activities. We think and hope that this will make your learning experience even better.

Yours sincerely,

Hilary Ward
Lead Inspector

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