

Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122390
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359242
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Michele Crichton

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Trevelyan
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2007
School address	Netherwitton Morpeth Northumberland NE61 4PB
Telephone number	01670 772685
Fax number	01670 772434
Email address	secretary@nunnykirk.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. She visited 10 lessons and 10 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to self-evaluation, the curriculum, pupils' progress and safeguarding. She also took into account the views of 18 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress pupils make at each stage of the school and in different subjects.
- How robust tracking procedures, data analysis and target-setting procedures are.
- How effectively leaders and managers at all levels drive school improvement.

Information about the school

Nunnykirk is a day and residential school for pupils with specific learning difficulties, primarily dyslexia. Some of the pupils have associated social and emotional needs. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. About half of pupils are privately funded, the rest currently come from several different local authorities. These are geographically wide ranging from East Anglia to southern Scotland. Nearly all pupils are White British. There are 18 boys who currently board, usually because they live too far away to travel daily.

Most pupils are admitted at times other than at the usual time of entry to school. A few arrive in the later stages of Key Stage 2 and many more arrive towards the end of Key Stage 3. There are currently no looked after children in the school and there are few children known to be eligible for free school meals.

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its range of quality marks and accreditations.

The school's boarding provision was inspected in February 2011 and the resulting Social Care Report is available on the Ofsted website.

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

This is a good school. It has good relationships with parents and carers who are very appreciative of the school's supportive and caring ethos, with typical comments such as, 'Since joining Nunnykirk my children have become happy, confident children who love going to school.' Additionally, 'All staff at Nunnykirk help to educate, encourage and motivate the children, as well as involve and support parents and carers. It's like being part of an extra family.'

There is good capacity for continued and sustained improvement. The school is well led and managed by staff who are committed to raising achievement and to pupils' continual improvements. This is achieved through constant and rigorous self-evaluation and effective continuing professional development. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school but do not sufficiently challenge leaders and managers in all areas of school development and improvement. Community cohesion is strong within the school and immediate locality but is less embedded with other partners within the United Kingdom and globally.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. High quality relationships and the commitment of all staff leave pupils feeling extremely safe. Pupils' responses to the school's provision for developing a healthy lifestyle are outstanding. They enjoy learning about what this means and readily put it into practice. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and the local community, resulting in them growing in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their above average attendance.

As a consequence of the pupils' significant special educational needs and/or disabilities, attainment is low on entry to the school. Although attainment remains low, pupils successfully make up for previous underachievement. Good progress is made overall across the school and in all subjects in the good curriculum. Notably, some pupils excel in speech and language, and subjects such as photography and art and design.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers predominantly plan their lessons for each individual taking into consideration their personal skills, abilities and aptitudes. Staff use individualised assessments effectively to ensure that work is appropriate and to support pupils' next steps in learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the skills and impact of the governing body by:
 - ensuring governors undertake additional training to enable them to challenge and support the school more fully
 - using governors' extended skill base to evaluate fully all aspects of the school improvement plan.
- Further promote community cohesion by:
- -providing more extensive and systematic ways for pupils to engage with a wider range of communities in the United Kingdom and globally
 - ensuring that the impact of these initiatives is audited.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' show enthusiasm for learning, develop their levels of concentration and behave well. Pupils make good progress overall. Some make outstanding progress, particularly in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics skills from their low attainment on entry. Although attainment remains low, it rises quickly as a result of the specific

strategies provided to help each pupil overcome their individual difficulties. Pupils enjoy their learning and their engagement is good. Work is made fun, learning activities are specifically planned to be the most relevant and meaningful for each pupil and are consistently appropriate to their interests and abilities. For example, in one lesson, pupils thoroughly relished revising their science coursework through playing an electronic version of, 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' An extensive range of questions were posed so that all pupils were equally successful in answering.

Attendance is above average overall. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle through the school's well-planned programme of health education, such as sports leadership lessons and rural studies. They also regularly engage in a wide variety of sporting activities, for example, the school is part of the Wanderers League. All pupils are given the opportunity to participate or play for their school against other schools in the league in football, basketball and a variety of other sporting activities. Links such as these, the many fund-raising events, the wide range of responsibilities pupils have in school, such as caring for livestock, and the many positive comments the school receives about its pupils demonstrate the outstanding extent that pupils contribute to the school and wider community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are well prepared for life after leaving the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ensure that all classrooms are enjoyable and supportive places in which to learn. They have high expectations of all pupils and the excellent relationships with them contribute strongly to their successful learning. Staff have a high level of expertise. Pupils' individual needs are known explicitly and staff plan carefully to ensure pupils achieve their best. The highly impressive questioning skills of the staff are evident in all lessons. These challenge pupils to give explicit information, justify answers or interpret findings. However, occasionally learning slows when teachers talk for too long or provide solutions too quickly to problems that have been set.

Staff have developed the curriculum over many years to ensure it is interesting, innovative and acutely focused on the distinct needs of the pupils it serves. Cross-curricular links are frequent. This means that learning takes place in meaningful and relevant contexts. For example, in one lesson, pupils extensively discussed the health and safety aspects in sports activities. They then went to the gym to identify and record the 'hazards' that could befall them, which had been skillfully pre-arranged.

A strong, caring, positive and supportive ethos pervades the whole school. Frequently, pupils have had exceptionally negative experiences of learning before they enter the school. This has resulted in previous poor behaviour and attendance, lack of progress and a disaffected attitude to learning. However, pupils blossom due to the care, guidance and support the school provides, which are of the highest quality. Very well-targeted support for all pupils enables them to make the best of the many opportunities provided. Additionally, the school works very effectively with external agencies and partners to provide targeted support to pupils and their families.

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?

Staff are focused on securing good learning and strong personal development for all pupils. This ambition is demonstrated by the embedded and shared vision that all staff have for the school. This drive is viewed as everyone's responsibility and is much in evidence when talking to staff and in school plans. A strong commitment to the individual lies at the heart of Nunnykirk's ethos and it gives priority to ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities for success. Progress is monitored extensively. It is finely reviewed to ensure that there is no discrimination and that all pupils have access to a wide range of provision and all achieve as well as they possibly can.

Safeguarding is a further strength of the school. All staff training is up to date and there are robust measures in place to ensure that all those who work with pupils are suitable to do so. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. Statutory requirements are met and the governing body ensures that pupils and staff are safe. Governors are very supportive of the school but do not yet sufficiently challenge leaders nor critically evaluate the success of the school's improvement plan.

Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily and pupils make a very strong contribution to the local community. Links to different ethnic communities and global connections, and opportunities for pupils' wider cultural awareness, are yet to be extensively established and their impact audited. The school has a highly positive relationship with most groups of parents and carers, who are kept well informed about their children's achievement, well-being and development.

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	3
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

Sixth form

Students cooperate well together and their behaviour is good. Relationships between staff and students are very good. The atmosphere is relaxed, but occasionally so too is the pace in lessons. However, the learning environment overall is highly positive. It promotes an ethos of independence, with good skill acquisition and students actively participate in steering their own learning. There are high expectations for what students will achieve and this is reflected in the appropriately-set targets for each individual. There are opportunities for students to re-sit GCSE examinations. Those who require it continue to receive a high level of literacy and numeracy support. The results for AS and A-level courses in art and photography show that students achieve well overall and sometimes outstandingly well, with frequent examples of students achieving an A or A* result. Examples of students' work seen during the inspection were impressive.

The provision is well led and managed. Self-evaluation is constant and critical, with a relentless focus on further improvements to students' outcomes. This is demonstrated, for example, by plans to further extend the provision for, and students' skills in, printing, etching and using lithographs.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Very few parents and carers expressed concerns. The very large majority are extremely positive about the school's provision and the outcomes it achieves. They rate very positively the quality of teaching, the meeting of pupils' particular needs, pupils' feeling safe and the quality of leadership and management. The findings of the inspection concur with the views of the majority. Many parents and carers were glowing in their praise for the school. This is captured in the comment, 'Our son has flourished at this school. His behaviour problems are no longer an issue. For our son, this school means he is going to have a much better chance of employment and take his part in society.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia 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 inspector received 18 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 32 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	67	5	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	11	61	7	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	50	8	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	78	4	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	67	4	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	67	5	28	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	7	39	8	44	0	0	0	0

entering employment)								
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	83	2	11	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	61	5	28	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	50	8	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	72	4	22	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	78	4	22	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher,

management:	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.



15 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia, Morpeth, NE61 4PB

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently.

It was very clear from what you said, and the responses from your parents and carers in their questionnaires, that you are happy at school, and feel very safe. Nunnykirk is a good school. Indeed, some things are outstanding. Your good food choices and extensive outdoor and sporting activities, for example, demonstrate your excellent knowledge of being healthy. It was also very clear from our conversations that you are exceptionally proud of your school. You gladly take on a number of responsibilities, such as feeding the pigs or tending to your vegetable patches. You are learning well overall, and sometimes exceptionally. For example, the quality of the photography and art work displayed around the school is of a very high calibre. It was lovely to see how much your teachers enjoy working with you and they are constantly thinking of ways to make your learning better and better.

There is something that could be improved though. You have few sustained links or partnerships beyond the school and the local community, or globally, to further benefit and extend your learning. Also, although the governors ensure that everyone is safe, they are not involved as much as they could be in all areas of school improvement.

I really enjoyed my time with you. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michele Crichton

Lead inspector

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