

Bamburgh School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108738
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	377806
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
Lead inspector	Henry Moreton

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	P Morris
Headteacher	L McKellar
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Henry Moreton
Anthony Kingston

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In addition to the 11 lessons observed taught by 10 teachers, pupils were seen arriving and leaving, at play and lunch. Inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised records of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Meetings were held with parents, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors looked at the documentation provided by the school, which included tracking sheets showing assessment of pupils' progress, as well as information about safeguarding. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to consider when planning the inspection. Questionnaire returns from staff and students were analysed together with 38 returns from the questionnaires sent out to parents and carers.

Information about the school

Bamburgh school is a special school catering for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The main categories of need are moderate learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional and social needs, severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability and autistic spectrum disorder. Many pupils have additional needs, including communication difficulties and those of a medical nature. The school is an average-sized special school. Virtually all pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come from all parts of the local authority and all but a few are transported to and from school. Many pupils join the school at times other than the start of a school year. Numbers are rising following a period when they were falling due to uncertainty about the school's future. Since September 2011, 20 pupils have been admitted. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is larger than average. The acting headteacher took up her part-time post in September 2011 and the two deputy headteachers are also in a temporary capacity, sharing the leadership of the school in the substantive and acting headteachers' absence.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils are provided for well in an inclusive setting. They make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave school. This is because the school provides good educational opportunities to match the individual needs of the diverse school population.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their personal development and learn to manage their own behaviour and develop confidence. This ensures they have good preparation for independent life.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons. Most are keen to come to school. They feel safe and behave well, often outstandingly so. The school is diligent in ensuring that pupils respect each other and this is routinely reflected in lessons where pupils listen and talk to each other in a caring way.
- Pupils benefit from teaching and learning opportunities of good quality. Teaching observed was mostly good. Staff provide good role models, and are committed to pupils' well being and their learning. Teachers use assessment information well to plan learning but school leaders do not evaluate provision or outcomes for the different categories of special educational need rigorously enough to form a view on how different groups are performing.
- Leadership and management are good. School leaders very effectively manage the fluctuating school roll, making good use of the school's excellent accommodation. This is perhaps best exemplified by the rapid expansion of the Early Years Foundation Stage last term and how several classes were reorganised from the start of this term.
- The school is emerging from a period of uncertainty about its future and because of the way the transition has been handled, staff morale is high. The team of staff are all pulling in the same direction. However, the governing body has no strategic plan in place to set a direction for the school's medium and longer term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take steps to move the school forward over the next few years by ensuring strategic planning is in place by September 2012, involving all those with an interest in the school's future.
- Make better use of data at whole school level by ensuring the achievement of the different groups of special educational need is recorded, tracked and evaluated, by September 2012.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The educational histories of the pupils are often patchy. Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school vary widely and are most often below that of pupils of a similar age nationally. At one end of the spectrum they range from the very lowest that can be recorded to the early levels of the National Curriculum. At the other end they are comparable to pupils of a similar age. For the less-able pupils progress is often in very small steps but most make good progress in the subjects they study. When they leave some students are nearer the national average. The more-able students also make good progress. In 2011, most students achieved the challenging targets the school had set them including at GCSE. All pupils make good progress in their personal development and in the skills for their future life. Pupils learn to work collaboratively with others, and do so well, an improvement since the previous inspection.

Pupils made good progress in virtually all of the lessons observed and it was not less than satisfactory. In an English lesson, the more-able Year 11 students evidenced their listening and speaking skills by discussing whether Priestley was right to try to persuade people to change from capitalism to socialism in 1945. As the lesson progressed, because of the arguments put forward by others, students moved from 'agree camps' to 'disagree camps', and vice versa. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in the development of their social and communication skills.

Pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is variable. Generally, it is below the standards found nationally. Similarly, by the time students leave school their reading attainment varies. The more-able students gain GCSEs in both English Language and English Literature, as well as other subjects, indicating reading standards at the national levels. All of the 2011 Year 11 leavers went on to either education or employment. Nine out of ten parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire think their child is achieving well, as did those who were spoken to by inspectors. A typical comment is that, 'My child's needs are extremely well met'. Inspection findings support the view of parents and carers.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire think their children are taught well. Inspectors support this view because virtually all of the lessons seen were good. Many had some outstanding features. None were inadequate. A quiet, calm and positive atmosphere in classrooms promotes pupils' social and moral development well. Lessons are planned to meet a wide range of needs and abilities. Teaching assistants are integral to pupils' learning and intervene appropriately. With teachers, they develop excellent relationships with pupils and are effective in ensuring pupils' social and emotional as well as their academic needs are well met.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are checked with colleagues outside of the school to ensure they are accurate. This information helps teachers to plan effectively. The structured plan to develop pupils' reading is well established and is applied consistently throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. From the earliest stages children are taught the structure of a book and children of all abilities gain understanding from enjoying picture books. Children are encouraged to make up and tell stories sequentially based on the pictures. Adult support encourages progress, fun and confidence. Staff's good subject knowledge is deployed well by managers to ensure their subject skills are used to best effect, including for the older students. Teachers plan activities that interest students. In an English lesson, Key Stage 3 students used dramatic techniques to explore Shakespeare's text. They explored what might happen when a boy from the Montagues falls in love with a girl from the Capulets. A visiting theatre group consolidates this love of drama well, enhancing pupils' social and cultural awareness. The youngest children developed empathy and a feeling for others through the well-managed reading activities about a 'scared teddy bear'. Learning targets are used to help pupils appreciate what is expected of them and many are aware of the progress they are making. Pupils' work is celebrated by good displays, especially in art, and this is an improvement on the previous inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers who returned the questionnaire agree that their child's lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour and that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively. The more-able pupils understand the different kinds of bullying. The behaviour and attitude to learning of pupils is good because of teachers' consistently high expectations. The 'no touch' rule is respected by all. Most pupils of all learning difficulties and disabilities have an enjoyment of school. The majority of pupils who returned the questionnaire report that behaviour in school and in their lessons is good most or all of the time. Pupils look after each other well and this is a harmonious school community. Pupils who exhibit extremes of challenging behaviour because of their learning difficulties make good progress in managing their behaviour. Staff manage well-ordered classrooms and there is a calm atmosphere within the school community. As a result, all pupils who returned the questionnaire report they feel safe in school. Attendance is average, rather than good, usually because of the absences caused when pupils are away from school for medical reasons.

Leadership and management

The school's procedures for ensuring pupils are safeguarded are secure. Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are safe and free from discrimination. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and it develops well the independence skills pupils need for life in the future. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is carefully planned to ensure the needs of children are met. Effective links are established with other settings so that resources and expertise are shared. Most pupils find the range of activities motivating and they contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In one lesson seen, students in Year 7 developed their social and moral awareness by discussing whether all the people in the world have what they want, and if they have the rights they need. Working initially in pairs, then groups and finally as a class they 'gave up' things dear to them until a consensus was reached. Returned questionnaires from parents and carers show they say their children feel safe in school and are well looked after. Staff are vigilant to ensure no pupil misses out and their good knowledge of individuals and the support structures they have in place enables them to do this well.

Staff enjoy working at the school. All those who returned the questionnaire stated without reservation that they were proud to be a staff member. Staff work closely together which helps them to share good practice and agree common approaches. As a result, there is consistency in managing pupils' behaviour, which, because of some pupils' special educational needs, is often challenging. Staff are well served by the governing body, which provides good support in the temporary absence of key staff. There are examples of improvement since the last inspection, and the areas identified then have been successfully tackled. The school has useful data on the progress made by individual pupils and year groups but does not do enough to chart the provision and outcomes of the groups of pupils with different types of special educational needs that are represented in the school.

The school is emerging through a period of transition. Senior leaders evaluate the school's work accurately and plan very well for the changing school population. The governing body has an accurate appreciation of the school's strengths and its weaknesses. It promotes equalities well, as instanced through its recruitment of staff and by the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Because of the uncertainty faced only recently about the school's long term future, too little is done to plan for the future, involving all those with a particular interest in these key decisions. The school's track record of success and its successful navigation of recent choppy waters demonstrate it has a strong capacity to improve.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.
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.



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bamburgh School, South Shields, NE34 7TD

You may remember when inspectors spent two days in your school before half term, and visited some of your lessons. We greatly enjoyed meeting you and watching you learn. We think your school is good. This is because it is good at helping you achieve as well as you can and preparing you well for life in the future. The teaching we saw is good and the lessons are interesting and fun. My colleague and I were most impressed by how you respect and look out for each other. We enjoyed the lessons we saw especially where the teachers let you show your speaking and listening skills. We like the way teachers teach you numeracy by using everyday examples since this prepares you well for the future. We also like the way they use visual timetables so that you know the structure of the day since this also develops your independence.

Your teachers check your individual progress well, but we have also asked them to see how different groups of you are doing. We have shared the details with your teachers and we think this will help you even more. We have also asked the governors to take a careful look at how the school is to develop in the future. Clearly, this is going to be of more relevance to those younger among you, but we would like you all to encourage your parents or carers to get involved in these important decisions. You can all help by also letting them and the staff know how you would like the school to improve further.

With my very best wishes for your future,

Yours sincerely

Henry Moreton
Lead inspector

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