

# Bennerley Fields Specialist Speech and Language College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	113037
<b>Local authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	378632
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 January–1 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Muir HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	82
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Glennice Birkin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Gerring
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Stratford Street Cotmanhay Ilkeston DE7 8QZ
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<b>Age group</b>	2–16
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## Introduction

Inspection team

David Muir

Her Majesty's Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons; nine teachers and one therapist were seen teaching. Meetings were held with three representatives of the governing body, two groups of pupils and a range of staff, including leaders, teachers and therapists. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation, strategic plans and evaluation of pupils' progress over time. Inspectors scrutinised 30 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Bennerley Fields provides education for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorders, speech and communication difficulties, visual and/or hearing impairment and associated behavioural difficulties. All pupils either have a statement of special educational needs or are undergoing statutory assessment.

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds; far fewer pupils than the national average are from minority ethnic groups and homes where English is not the main spoken language. A large proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils attend from a wide geographical area of Derbyshire. On leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage, some children enter the main school while others go to local mainstream schools or other special schools.

The school has been a specialist school in communication and interaction since July 2009 and holds several awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Careers Mark and the Derbyshire Personalised Learning Award. The headteacher had been in post for one month at the time of this inspection.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, a period of instability in leadership has caused the school to lose consistency and rigour in many aspects of its work. Staff expectations about the quality of education have lowered and the changing needs of pupils in Key Stages 2 to 4 are not being met.
- The new headteacher has begun to identify where improvements are needed. The leadership team is showing an increasing awareness of how to tackle underperformance and realistic plans are being devised for this purpose. It is too early to see the impact of these plans.
- Achievement is inadequate as pupils in Key Stages 2 to 4 make inconsistent progress. An unacceptable proportion of pupils underperform in key areas of mathematics and science, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is positive achievement in the school's specialist areas of language and communication, including speech and language therapy, and in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the provision and achievement remain outstanding.
- The quality of teaching for pupils in Key Stages 2 to 4 is inadequate. Too many lessons result in inadequate learning. This is due to staff not taking into account the needs of these pupils when planning lessons. Consequently, work is not tailored effectively to meet their needs or to challenge them. Too much learning for these pupils is teacher-led and there are too few opportunities for them to develop independence. Learning objectives and their targets are often unspecific and do not make clear how learning is to be assessed.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety overall are satisfactory. They are polite and welcoming. However, independence in Key Stages 2 to 4 is not well promoted and pupils do not have opportunities to develop this effectively. A high level of

control does not enable pupils to develop ways of managing their own behaviour.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 by:
  - eradicating all inadequate teaching
  - ensuring best practice in the use of assessment is adopted by all teachers, in order to inform teaching and appropriately challenge pupils of all abilities in lessons
  - ensuring that the stronger practice is used to model and inform all teaching, so that pupils are able to make improved progress
  - establishing links with other schools where there is good and outstanding practice so that staff can be exposed to higher levels of expectation
  - providing pupils with opportunities to work independently and to have more responsibilities.
  
- Improve the school's capacity to sustain improvement by:
  - ensuring all members of the school community consistently focus on accelerating pupils' progress
  - developing a more rigorous approach to performance management so that lines of accountability are clear and focus on pupils' achievement
  - ensuring better coordination of the work undertaken to improve how teachers use assessment data to inform their teaching
  - review all roles and responsibilities so that there are clear line-management structures which focus on meeting the changing needs and raising the achievement of all pupils
  - ensuring all initiatives are rigorously monitored and reviewed to demonstrate a clear and rapid impact on improving provision and outcomes for pupils
  - establishing robust procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning and ensure that high expectations inform judgements in this area.
  
- Improve achievement for all pupils by:
  - ensuring there is consistency in all areas of the school's work through robust monitoring of performance
  - establishing systems which focus on assessing how well pupils are developing aspects of their personal skills.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Due to the nature of the pupils' disabilities and special educational needs, attainment on entry is well below the standards expected for their age. During their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make outstanding progress overall. The gains

in learning are recorded meticulously using self-adhesive notes and photographs to record contemporary evidence. This evidence informs assessment sheets and records of achievement which are used very effectively to inform next steps in learning and ensure that children make outstanding progress. Up to the end of last academic year, pupils made at least good and sometimes outstanding progress in the core subjects at Key Stage 1. However, in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, the proportion of pupils who made good or better progress in the core subjects decreased. Data show that up to half of the pupils in the secondary age range made inadequate progress in science, and the proportion of pupils who made less than expected progress in mathematics also increased significantly. In the generally stronger subject of English, there is clear evidence of significant underperformance by some pupils in the older Key Stage 2 class. In addition to data collected over time, the levels of learning seen in one third of the lessons observed during the inspection confirmed that inadequate progress is made in an unacceptably high proportion of lessons.

Since last summer, when school leaders identified trends of underachievement, action has been taken which has started to have an impact. However, so far, the impact is in its early stages and there is not yet a secure trend of improvement. There is no significant difference in the progress made by pupils with different disabilities or special educational needs. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children make good progress. The evidence from the inspection shows that despite pupils making significantly better progress in some areas, pupils make inadequate progress overall.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is inadequate overall due to a high level of inconsistency in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. During the inspection, lessons observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate. The strongest teaching seen was in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this supports the outstanding progress being made in that area over time. However, with the exception of Key 1 and specialist subject areas, too many lessons elsewhere are inadequate. In lessons observed jointly with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, the leaders' view concurred with the judgement of the inspectors in most cases. Where there is inadequate teaching, there are some recurring areas where improvements are needed such as an unacceptably slow pace and low expectations which lead to less challenge. In many cases, the minimal promotion of independent learning among the pupils and no adaptation of tasks or activities to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils also slow the rate of learning. In some lessons, learning objectives were unclear which made it difficult for teachers to assess the quality of learning taking place. In lessons, support staff often provide excessive levels of support, so that pupils do not make gains in their personal development: a lack of specialist knowledge around the changing needs of pupils also has a negative impact on their progress. Where these elements were observed, the progress made by pupils was compromised and much was inadequate.

However, in the stronger lessons, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, significant strengths in teaching and support including improved levels of communication and the use of a variety of methods such as signs and symbols. In addition, effective questioning is used well to move learning on and assess pupils'

understanding alongside a well-planned use of varied activities which promote learning. The positive behaviour shown by pupils supports their own learning and a good understanding of pupils' needs and abilities also help to enable better learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not well promoted across the curriculum or referenced clearly in teachers' lesson plans. Of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires, all agree that their children are taught well in this school with no negative responses. Inspection findings overall do not support this view. Nearly all pupils who returned a questionnaire, said that teaching is good most of the time.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are well mannered and polite. They show a genuine interest in visitors and are keen to engage in conversations and share jokes, appropriately. The number of incidents of challenging behaviour has steadily decreased in the past three years, and continues to do so, according to school records. Inspectors observed no incidents of negative behaviour. Often, this was because pupils were compliant and did as they were asked. Sometimes, behaviour support is not proportionate and pupils are not given the opportunity to manage their own behaviour as they are too closely controlled. This strategy does not encourage the development of their independent personal skills. When given opportunities to work together and to support each other, pupils rise to the challenge well and clearly enjoy it. Pupils look after each other and show good levels of care and a strong awareness of their peers' needs.

Most pupils attend school regularly, although there are a small number who are absent too often. These pupils with lower attendance are not achieving as well as they could. The school too often records these absences as authorised, when further checks and verification would be appropriate and would encourage parents and carers to ensure a better level of attendance. When inspectors spoke to pupils, they were adamant that there is no bullying in the school and they feel safe. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that behaviour is good and that their children are safe in the school. A small minority of responses suggested that there are some concerns among parents and carers that there is some disruptive behaviour in lessons and that bullying is not always dealt with effectively. No evidence was found during the inspection to support this view.

### **Leadership and management**

Discussions during the inspection showed that leaders have a broadly accurate view of where there are strengths in the school and where improvements are needed. As a result of this awareness, they have started to formulate appropriate plans and take action to make the required improvements. However, to date there has been little implementation of new initiatives and only minimal evidence of improvement in the quality of teaching or the achievement of pupils. Consequently, the capacity for sustained school improvement is not proven. The school does not currently use the strengths that it has within its own staff to model and promote best practice and there are few partnerships with other schools and colleges which have a positive impact on the quality of education provided by the school.

The data which have been collected by the school are not used effectively enough to promote improved learning in all areas. For example, although assessment information is collected termly it is not used well by teachers to target pupils' learning appropriately according to their levels. Leaders have not previously set robust targets for staff performance, which hold staff accountable for the progress made by the pupils in their care. Although some action has been taken to identify where performance is weaker, there is still a significant level of weaker teaching which has not been addressed effectively.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders in this area have continued to build on, and develop, the previously identified outstanding practice from the time of the previous inspection. This has resulted in a continued ethos of high expectations, challenge and achievement for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The curriculum is satisfactory as it has the potential to meet the needs of pupils, although it is currently under review to ensure that it is able to match the changing needs and abilities of pupils. However, the inadequate delivery of some elements of the curriculum diminish its impact on achievement. Leaders also recognise that the curriculum needs to be modified to better engage, challenge and stimulate pupils to a higher level. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not well planned or monitored for its impact on pupils or the wider school community. It does not, therefore, contribute effectively to pupils' personal development.

The governing body does not effectively hold the school to account for its performance. Only a small proportion of governors are active members of the governing body. School records show that the most recent formal visit by a governor to the school to collect first-hand evidence of the quality of its work was in 2010. The school is compliant with all aspects of safeguarding. School leaders monitor the progress made by different groups of pupils according to their needs, ethnicity, gender and other factors. These data show that, although the groups are small, there is no significant difference in the progress that they make with regard to those groups mentioned. However, there are significant differences in the progress made by pupils in different key stages. School leaders are aware of this and are devising plans to use the better practice in the school to inform and improve its weaker aspects.



## 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](http://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.
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.**



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Bennerley Fields Specialist Speech and Language College, Ilkeston, DE7 8QZ**

On behalf of the two inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for making us feel very welcome in your school, for giving us a memorable experience and sharing your experiences of your school.

During our visit, we found that Bennerley Fields School is not providing you with a satisfactory education overall and that it requires 'special measures'. Inspectors will visit the school again to see how things are improving. As part of the inspection we looked at how well you behave and if you are happy to come to school. Seeing you around the school and talking to you, we judged your behaviour and safety to be satisfactory. We also found that the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, as it was at the last inspection three years ago. Another area which is strong is the speech and language therapy provided.

The current leadership team is determined to ensure that you receive the best possible education. The new headteacher already has plans for ways in which she wants to improve the school and we talked about how she can start to put them into action. It was clear from your questionnaires and your comments how much you appreciate the staff and their hard work and how much you enjoy school. However, too much of the teaching is not good enough and does not meet your needs as effectively as it might. As a result, you do not make good enough progress in some aspects of your learning. This means that by the time you leave school, you are not as well prepared as you could be and have not developed the level of independence that you need to take forward to the next stage of your lives.

We have asked the headteacher to improve three things: to make sure that teaching quality improves; that you are able to achieve more; and that the leadership of the school is fully focused on how well you do in all aspects of your development. You can help with this, by reminding your teachers that you want to learn more and develop more independence. Once again, sincere thanks to you all for the time you spent with us during the visit and I would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Muir  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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