

Bardwell School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123444
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380639
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sonja Joseph

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
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	55
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Jane Waine
Headteacher	Chris Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	30–31 March 2009
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph

Additional inspector

Andrew Blow

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 13 lessons, amounting to about five hours of teaching in total, taught by ten teachers. Learning walks comprising short visits to lessons in a range of subjects were carried out to assess the quality of behaviour and the work undertaken by specific groups of pupils. Approximately one third of lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Discussions took place with senior and middle leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor and different groups of pupils. 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 progress tracking and performance data, the school development plan, pupils' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. The questionnaire responses from 14 parents and carers, 40 pupils and 28 staff were also analysed.

Information about the school

Bardwell School is a smaller-than-average special school. It caters for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, complex communication difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and sensory impairments, usually in combinations of complex needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. More than half of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average. The school has two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils with high medical care needs has doubled. The school has not met the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Bardwell is co-located with a mainstream primary, nursery, secondary school and children's centre on the same site. The school holds a number of awards such as Activemark, Investor in People Bronze award, and SEN Specialist Schools status for communication and interaction.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not a good school because since the last inspection, the school has gone through a period of significant change of leadership and staff. As a result, pupils' previous good achievement dipped and progress over time is now satisfactory through the school. Significant improvements are currently being made in the quality of teaching and the school's detailed tracking data show clearly that pupils are beginning to make much better progress from their well below average starting points on entry to the school. The school's post-16 provision is good. Pupils develop skills that prepare them well for the next stage of life.
- Teaching over time is satisfactory but is improving as a result of a good programme of continuing professional development. In the more effective lessons teachers use information about pupils' progress to provide well-focused tasks that are engaging and motivating. In less effective lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their ability to learn independently, particularly when writing or using mathematics.
- Good behaviour has been consolidated since the last inspection. All pupils say they feel safe, safeguarding procedures are robust and effective strategies to support pupils have a positive impact on helping them manage their behaviour.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governing body know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Teaching and learning are now well managed and this process is linked well to the performance management of staff. The effectiveness of leadership across the school is uneven due to significant changes in leadership and management roles, and is currently satisfactory. School leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to ensure that all leaders rigorously use data at a whole-school level to identify trends and patterns and to inform evaluations of teaching and learning.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by :
 - improving the use of whole-school data to inform leaders and the governing body about patterns and trends in the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - ensuring that subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring their subject areas across the school
 - improving further the monitoring of teaching so that best practices are shared and applied consistently.

- Improve pupils' abilities to learn independently by:
 - increasing the opportunities they are given to work independently, particularly when developing their writing and mathematical skills
 - making sure the level of support pupils receive is carefully balanced against the need to promote their ability to learn independently.

- Increase the proportion of teaching so that most is good or better by January 2013, by ensuring that:
 - all teaching provides a varied range of activity for pupils of all abilities to learn new skills at a good pace
 - teaching, especially in mathematics, consistently provides models of how to solve problems
 - teachers make the 'steps to success' (the guidance teachers provide on how learning is to proceed and progress in a lesson) more useful to pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for their age. Observation of learning and performance in the classroom, the scrutiny of pupils' work and the examination of progress against learning targets show that pupils are now beginning to make good progress across all key stages and in the sixth form. However, achievement over time is satisfactory rather than good as it is too early for recent improvements to have impacted fully on pupils' progress. Pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make slightly better progress in their reading, writing and communication skills than in mathematics. This is mainly as a result of an increased focus on communication across the school. Nevertheless, both literacy and numeracy are well promoted in lessons to support pupils in improving their skills. In food technology, for example, pupils were encouraged to use their

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numeracy skills to measure and select different coloured measuring containers.

Over time, progress in both English and mathematics is improving steadily for all groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language. There are no significant differences in the attainment and progress of other different groups and no gap between the attainment and progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other groups. While inspection evidence and pupils' current work indicate that attainment in reading at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is low compared to that of all pupils nationally, appropriate strategies are now in place to develop pupils' reading skills at a good pace. For more able pupils, this includes an effective systematic approach to phonics where pupils learn about the sounds letters make. Pupils at earlier stages of development or those with particular disabilities and special educational needs make good progress through symbol and whole-word recognition. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to learn new skills, but occasionally lessons do not include enough opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties develop their communication skills well. For example, in an effective sensory communication lesson the teachers' very high quality skills in questioning and subject knowledge developed pupils' thinking and listening skills, extended vocabulary and ensured pupils persisted with a task. The small steps of progress they make build up steadily over time and lead to accreditation by the time they leave the school's post-16 provision. An even wider range of accreditation is achieved by pupils with less severe disabilities. As a result, the vast majority are very successful in moving to suitable placements when they leave. Pupils make particularly strong progress in personal, social and health education lessons.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the progress their children make. Although the inspection identified improvements to progress, it is satisfactory overall.

Quality of teaching

Parents, carers and pupils feel that pupils are taught well. Inspection evidence found that the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress over time is satisfactory and is improving. The percentage of good teaching is increasing, particularly since September 2011, and in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection teaching was good, including in the sixth form. As a result students' progress is accelerating, and many of those who were underperforming are catching up.

In the best lessons which are in the minority, questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' understanding, and support assistants contribute by taking responsibility for small groups, promoting pupils' independence or giving additional explanation to aid pupils' understanding. Occasionally, interventions are less successful and the progress of one pupil slows while another pupil is being helped. In less successful

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lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn independently, particularly in writing and mathematics. Occasionally, the balance of providing support and promoting independent learning is not effective. Not all teachers demonstrate a precise model or give a sufficiently clear explanation of new methods, particularly in mathematics. While all teachers share 'steps to success' with the class, only in the better lessons are they used effectively to promote pupils' understanding of how to judge progress for themselves.

Teachers draw on a wide range of strategies and methods, including good use of information and communication technology to respond to pupils' different learning styles and to bring lessons to life. Sensory elements feature in lessons, where this is appropriate to meet the pupils' needs. All teachers build regular opportunities into their lessons to reinforce or develop pupils' social skills, for example through co-operative working in groups, taking turns and helping others. They teach pupils about various religions and cultures, which effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged at all times to be aware of those around them and to think about their own actions. The curriculum has a good balance of academic, vocational, physical and creative elements and impacts well on teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy coming to school and usually engage enthusiastically with new experiences. They believe behaviour in and around the school is good. Their behaviour as observed in lessons and around the school is typically good. On the few occasions that pupils' behaviour falls short of the standards expected, teachers respond effectively and consistently, taking good account of the special educational needs of individuals. Disruption to lessons caused by off-task behaviour is rare because staff respond in a planned and measured way to refocus the pupil concerned. The integrated nature of therapy and education ensures that pupils lose the minimum possible time from their education while being able to access support for their speech, language, communication and physical needs.

Pupils' relationships with staff are warm and friendly, showing that pupils feel safe in school. This contributes strongly to the positive learning environment that exists in classrooms. Pupils visit mainstream schools, providing good opportunities for them to interact with other pupils and develop social skills. Attendance, although below average when compared to all pupils nationally, is improving and absence is related mainly to the high care medical needs of some pupils. Punctuality to school and lessons is good.

The very large majority of parents and carers have positive views of behaviour at school and that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils report either verbally or through the use of symbols, that they feel safe, a view endorsed by their parents and carers. The pupils are well informed about the dangers of cyber-bullying and steps to take to avoid it. The school's records show that there are no recorded incidents of bullying or racist or homophobic behaviour as a result of

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specific personal, social and health education programmes. There have been no permanent exclusions for over three years, which is testament to the school's inclusive ethos. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Leadership and management

The school leadership team and the governing body have undergone a significant restructuring since the previous inspection. However, the speed with which improvements have been implemented has been limited due to a period of staffing disruption. This has now been resolved. Members of the newly established leadership team have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by a committed staff team. Changes have been introduced which are improving pupils' achievement, for example the school has enhanced the range of information and communication technology across all key stages. The recent focus on reading has improved pupils' interest and keenness to learn in the subject. In addition, the school has maintained or enhanced its range of accreditations available to pupils at Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form. These improvements demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

The school has improved the way pupils' progress is tracked, so that more rigorous targets are now being set, which is helping to raise attainment. However, whole-school data are not yet being used as effectively as possible to identify trends in pupils' achievement. Lesson observation is frequent and rigorous, and inspection findings closely reflect senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching. The senior leadership team recognises that the current sharing of good practice in teaching needs to be extended further, together with any tailored support required, in order to eradicate any remaining weakness in practice. The positive impact of recent work can already be seen in the improved teaching across all key stages. However, inconsistency still exists between classes since some middle leaders are new to their role and are not involved fully in developing and monitoring their subjects across the school. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet requirements, with all the appropriate checks completed for adults who work with children.

The curriculum is good because it meets individual pupils' needs well and enables all pupils to achieve, regardless of their disabilities or difficulties. The school offers a very wide range of community, cultural and reflective activities which effectively promote spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The governing body and staff ensure that equal opportunities are promoted well and discrimination is tackled competently.

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.
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.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bardwell School, Bicester OX26 4RZ

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do. Special thanks go to those who talked with us about the school and for the lunch you cooked for one of the inspectors. You go to a satisfactory school and are making satisfactory progress although your achievement has improved recently. We were very encouraged by the way you help each other and the care and consideration you show towards all adults and visitors. Your behaviour and the attitudes you show to school work are good. Thank you for taking the time to give us your views of the school. It was clear from talking together and the questionnaire replies we received from you and your parents and carers that you feel safe at school.

In your questionnaires most of you said teaching is good and you learn a lot. We found it to be satisfactory overall and would like more teaching to be as good as the very best. We found you learn best when you are encouraged to be active in lessons, and do some work on your own. To help you achieve even more we have asked staff to make sure that all lessons are of equally good quality and that you are encouraged to read or work things out independently. We know that you will play your part by continuing to work hard in all lessons. We have also made suggestions to help staff increase the role they play in making the school even better.

Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph
Lead inspector

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