

Skilts School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103617
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355411
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Griffiths
Headteacher	Charles Herriotts
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
School address	Gorcott Hill
	Redditch
	B98 9ET
Telephone number	01527 853851
Fax number	01527 857949
Email address	enquiry@skilts.bham.sch.uk

Age group5–11Inspection dates9–10 March 2011Inspection number355411

Boarding provision Social care Unique Reference Number Social care inspector Skilts School SC033753 Martha Nethaway

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector. Twelve lessons were observed, involving nine teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior management team, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school development plan, assessment and tracking information, the headteacher's and senior managers' monitoring information and pupils' workbooks. Aspects of social care were looked at in the boarding provision. The inspection questionnaires were analysed, including 24 from parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The inspectors explored the achievement of pupils at both key stages to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- They examined the effectiveness of target setting and the adaptation of the curriculum in improving outcomes for pupils.
- The inspectors clarified the structures by which the governing body monitors finance and challenges school leaders.

Information about the school

This small school provides day, part-time and weekly residential care for primary aged boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). All of the pupils have statements of special educational needs and a minority of pupils have additional learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder. A high proportion are looked after by the local authority. The majority of pupils are White British. There are also pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds including African, Caribbean and Asian, and all speak English fluently. Pupils are referred to the school by Birmingham local authority. The school aims to re-integrate pupils into mainstream schools where possible. A significant number join or leave the school other than at the usual time of admission and transfer.

Inspection judgements

Overall	errective	eness:	now	gooa	is th	e school?	

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Main findings

Skilts is a good school. It provides pupils with a good education and good residential care. Parents and carers are very pleased with their children's experiences at the school and say that, 'The staff are very supportive' and 'fantastic'. One parent summed up the views of others when commenting: 'My child is settled and confident. He thinks more carefully now about his actions and the consequences.'

Many pupils join the school with knowledge and skills, which are much lower than those expected for their age. As a result of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive, pupils' attitudes to education and their behaviour are good by the time they reach the upper junior classes. Pupils make good progress academically, and some make outstanding progress, although attainment is still below the national expectations by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils with additional learning difficulties make equally good progress because they receive sensitive support to help them. All pupils achieve well in their personal development, particularly in gaining self-esteem and confidence. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and they feel safe at school. Pupils enjoy learning and this is reflected in their regular attendance. This represents a significant achievement because most pupils arrive at the school with a history of poor attendance and some have had very challenging behaviour. Pupils contribute effectively to the school and the wider community through the school council and recycling opportunities.

The quality of teaching is good overall because adults know the pupils very well and have high expectations of them. Teaching is occasionally outstanding when lessons contain exciting practical elements, such as in science. However, the management of pupils' behaviour is inconsistent on occasions and teachers' marking does not always identify what pupils need to learn next. Nevertheless, staff assess pupils' progress carefully and provide activities which are challenging and matched well to pupils' abilities and targets. The curriculum is good because it is adapted well to the pupils' needs, especially in Years 5 and 6 where there are some excellent features in the provision of themed activities. However, the curriculum for the youngest pupils in the school does not include enough opportunities for them to experience outdoor activities, and the outside space is not well developed. Teachers plan interesting lessons to which the pupils respond well. Learning is enhanced by the very wide range of extra activities such as sporting and musical opportunities and visits to places of interest.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The outstanding sense of ambition and drive from the headteacher and senior management team are pivotal in the quest to raise attainment and ensure that every pupil does the best that he can. Leaders monitor teaching and learning well and evaluate the school's work effectively. They are supported well and held to account by a good governing body which takes an active interest in the

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school. However, the three-year plan to show how the school will provide access to the buildings and grounds for people with disabilities is not detailed enough. The quality of boarding is good and meets all key national minimum standards. Pupils benefit from the well-organised residential provision and the caring, supportive house staff who look after them effectively. The school promotes equality and diversity well. It provides an ethos, which respects and values all people and helps prepare pupils to live in a diverse society. The school has a good track record of success and a good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the inconsistencies in teaching by:
 - ensuring that the behaviour of a few of the youngest pupils is always managed effectively
 - making sure that teachers' marking identifies the next steps that pupils will learn.
- Extend the curriculum for the youngest pupils by:
 - including a range of activities for them to experience outdoor learning
 - developing the outside area so that pupils have plenty of resources with which to play and learn.
- Expand on the three-year plan to show more clearly how the school will provide access to the buildings and grounds for people with disabilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils respond well to the school's calm and safe haven where they enjoy learning and achieve well. From low attainment on entry, they quickly develop positive attitudes to their work because of the support and encouragement of their teachers.

They learn to appreciate the caring atmosphere of the school, and their attendance and interest in learning improve significantly as they settle into the school. As a result of the good teaching, pupils make good progress throughout the school. They make especially good progress in English and mathematics, although levels of attainment are lower than the nationally expected levels by the time they leave. Pupils with additional learning difficulties are well supported and also make good progress because they feel well cared for and are confident that any problems will be resolved. This has a positive impact on their well-being, particularly in improving their self-esteem and confidence.

Pupils quickly become aware of the high standards which are expected of them and build good relationships with staff, doing their best to live up to their expectations. Although they often arrive at the school with negative attitudes to learning and gaps in their knowledge caused by poor attendance in mainstream schools, they soon realise that the staff are there to help them. Those who begin with aggressive reactions to education calm down and begin to respond more positively to learning. The boarding staff aid this process well by helping residential pupils to understand the school's rules and daily routines so that they settle happily and feel safe and supported. This leads to good behaviour among the older pupils because they soon realise that the staff want the best for them. As a result, they enjoy their boarding experiences, work hard and want to succeed. This was

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particularly evident in a lesson with pupils in Year 6 where they were asked to discuss historical evidence about a character from Victorian times. Pupils volunteered ideas without hesitation or self-consciousness because they were very well supported by staff. Each member of the class participated eagerly because the quality of teaching and learning was excellent.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They demonstrate tolerance and understanding. Consequently, all the pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who are looked after, work together in harmony and contribute effectively to the school community. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being part of the school council, and involving themselves in recycling, composting and supporting international charities. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of many of the factors, which affect their health, such as the impact of healthy eating and physical exercise, and they are keen to take part in activities to improve their well-being. They make healthy choices at mealtimes and thoroughly enjoy sporting activities such as swimming, mountain-biking and football. Pupils' good progress in basic literacy, numeracy, social and enterprise skills helps prepare them effectively for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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?

Lessons are well planned, challenging and effectively organised. Teachers use computers well to stimulate pupils' interest and support them in their writing. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and their academic and personal achievement. They combine effective behaviour management strategies with very positive promotion of the pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment. However, there are occasional incidents when the behaviour of a few new pupils is not well managed, which slows the pace of learning. Nevertheless, pupils are encouraged to do the best they can which has a good impact on their learning. Teachers make good use of skilful questioning during and at the end of lessons to check pupils' understanding. They use assessment effectively to ensure that pupils strive to reach challenging targets which are printed out for them and constantly referred to. Staff regularly discuss pupils' progress in detail and use their assessments to tailor daily activities specifically for individuals. As a result, pupils are given work that is matched well to their needs, although marking is inconsistent and does not always pinpoint the next steps in learning.

The curriculum is successfully adapted to suit the pupils' learning needs, especially at the top end of the school. For example, there are some outstanding features in the way staff focus on methods, which specifically address each pupil's learning targets through exciting themed activities and drama. Senior leaders, carefully monitor the curriculum, to ensure it meets the needs of the youngest pupils. For instance, the school has assessed the requirements of its recent intake of pupils in Years 1 and 2. This has led to the need for these youngest pupils to have access to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, which has been introduced to the benefit of the pupils. However, there is limited provision for an outdoor curriculum and the outside play area is not fully developed. Even so, the pupils' enjoyment and the development of their personal skills are enhanced significantly through a very wide range of extra activities. These include Forest School, music and sporting activities. In addition, visits to historical sites and a local chocolate factory, and the use of Skilts Radio to practise speaking and listening skills enrich pupils' learning.

One of the main reasons for the school's success is the outstanding pastoral care, support and guidance it provides for pupils and their families. Residential staff work together very effectively with the school nurse and other professionals, which helps to enrich the communication between the school, parents and carers. Staff know the pupils extremely well and are firmly committed to giving them as much help as possible to ensure that they develop as individuals. In addition, the parent support advisor is readily available to help families when the need arises and is a valued point of contact for parents and carers. Adults intervene quickly when a pupil is experiencing difficulty so that all are made to feel special and know that their efforts are valued. Teaching assistants are well trained and give a high level of individual support to all pupils, enabling them to be confident when attempting new skills and preparing for entry to their next school.

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?

The headteacher and senior management team work together as a strong team to do the best for the pupils. They are highly successful in embedding ambition and driving improvement. All aspects of the school are monitored regularly and improved upon to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. The school's intervention strategies are effective in helping pupils manage their behaviour. Individual teachers lead subjects or particular aspects of the school's provision well and are held accountable. The excellent management of the school's tracking procedures gives leaders a clear overview of pupils' progress. This means that speedy intervention can be made whenever necessary to support pupils' achievement. As a result of the good-guality assessments of pupils' progress in academic learning and personal development, the school ensures that every pupil has equal access to school experiences. Diversity is celebrated well in the day, parttime and weekly residential care and the school is a cohesive community. Parents are regarded as vital to their children's' progress. They are kept very well informed and seen as full partners in the pupils' education. Partnerships with external agencies and other schools are good. Links with the wider community are productive; for example, there are effective links with the secondary schools to which pupils will transfer when they leave Skilts, and also links with a Dutch school.

The governing body has good procedures for monitoring the school's finance and challenging school leaders. These help the governors to hold the school to account and maintain good value for money. Statutory requirements are met and the school has effective procedures for evaluating its performance and provision. However, although the school has an outline of a three-year disability access plan, it is too brief and does not provide enough detail about the areas to improve. The school's procedures for safeguarding and protecting pupils are good and ensure that they are safe. All staff and governors are checked to make sure that they are suitable to work with children, and records are well maintained. Good communication between the boarding and teaching staff means that careful consideration is given to child protection, health promotion and pupils' individual needs.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Boarding provision

The guality of boarding is good and meets all key national minimum standards. The recommendations from the last inspection have all been addressed. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school provides an ethos which respects and values all people and helps prepare pupils to live in a diverse society. The provision for being healthy is outstanding. Pupils enjoy excellent physical, emotional and mental health. Great emphasis is placed upon developing key skills so that pupils are helped to develop and mature which enhances their personal, social and emotional development. A key strength of the school is the input and support from the school nurse and the parent support advisor which helps to enrich the support, help and communication between the school, parents and carers. Pupils' health needs are met and their welfare is assured by the school's excellent policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment. Pupils enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that take account of their health, racial and cultural requirements. The catering team are exceptionally accomplished at providing high quality, varied and tasty meals. The provision for staying safe is good. Safety in the residential houses is good. Pupils feel safe, valued and respected and all reasonable measures are taken to minimise risks of harm to pupils' welfare. One pupil commented, 'I think this is a safe school.' The school works hard to promote an anti-bullying ethos in the houses. Staff promote, encourage and reinforce positive behaviour. Pupils are well supported towards the goal of self-management of their behaviour within the context of mutual respect and positive interpersonal relationships with staff. One parent summed this up: 'My child's behaviour is getting better at this school. The support has been brilliant.' The provision for helping pupils to enjoy their boarding experiences and achieve their potential is outstanding. The school's residential provision actively supports pupils' educational progress at the school. Pupils receive extensive individualised support when they need it. Staff are confident with supporting homework activities, reading with pupils

and extending the development of pupils' life skills. This includes good use of the 'Forest School' during the evening. The provision for helping pupils to make a positive contribution to their life in school is outstanding. All pupils have clear care plans which provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect, consider and contribute to their own personal development and direction. Pupils are encouraged to try, develop and succeed. The school council allows pupils to contribute ideas and developments to school life through an organised process. Residential pupils stay on a short term and flexible basis. Pupils are actively encouraged to contact their families during their residential stay. Communication with families is very strong and supportive. The provision for economic well-being is good. The accommodation is of a good standard and is well maintained. All pupils are provided with their own room which is not shared with others while resident. Pupils are encouraged to personalise their own spaces; for example, they bring in from home items such as duvet covers and posters for walls. Pupils can bathe and take care of their personal needs with privacy and dignity. The provision for organisation is good. Pupils benefit from good communication between boarding staff and educational staff, which is highly constructive. Effective links over matters such as child protection, health and education ensures that individual needs of pupils are carefully considered. Pupils, parents, carers and stakeholders have access to a range of useful documentation about the school's provision. Pupils are looked after by staff, who understand them well and are able to meet their needs consistently. Pupils receive the care and services they require from a well qualified, dedicated and competent staff. The governing body has an effective input towards monitoring and evaluating the welfare of the pupils. Governors are supportive and dedicated to the school.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

■ All national minimum standards are met.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2	
5.		

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed positive views and indicated that they are satisfied with their children's experiences at the school. They are unanimous in their views that their children are safe, the teaching is good and the school keeps them well informed about children's progress. There were no significant concerns, although a very small minority indicated a little dissatisfaction. The inspectors followed up the aspects mentioned and found that the school takes careful account of parents' and carers' views and provides them with plenty of information about how they can support their children at home. Members of staff actively encourage healthy lifestyles, prepare pupils for the future, deal with pupils' particular needs and modify unacceptable behaviour. The school is led and managed effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Skilts School 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 inspection team received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree				Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	50	11	46	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	71	6	25	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	75	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	58	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	46	12	50	1	4	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 entering employment)	13	54	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	67	7	29	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	63	8	33	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	63	7	29	0	0	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	15	63	8	33	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	63	8	33	0	0	1	4

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

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.

What inspection judgements mean

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 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 2009/10 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 management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.
	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.

11 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Skilts School, Redditch, B98 9ET

You may remember that we came to your school recently. Thank you for making

us feel welcome. We enjoyed talking to you in your classrooms and in a meeting. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found.

We think you go to a good school.

We could see that you enjoy school and you make good progress in your learning and in your personal development.

Your behaviour is good - well done!

The adults at the school care, guide and support you exceptionally well.

You do many interesting activities which you like and are keen to be involved in lots of after-school clubs.

All the adults work hard to give you as much help as possible and they are good at making sure the work they ask you to do is suitable for each of you.

The school involves your parents and carers exceptionally well.

The headteacher and the senior managers run the school well and have excellent ambition and drive to make it even better.

We have asked the school to do three things to improve.

Ensure consistency in teachers' marking and their management of behaviour.

Improve the outdoor area for the youngest pupils and provide more outdoor activities for them.

Write a more detailed plan to say how the school will help pupils, staff and visitors with disabilities to have access to all parts of the buildings and grounds.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and supporting each other.

Yours sincerely

Anna Coyle Lead inspector



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