

# Batchwood School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 117674           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Hertfordshire    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 379452           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 26–27 April 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Jeffery Plumb    |

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>                 | 11–16                                  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 64                                     |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Kerry Pollard                          |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Anne Spencer                           |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 4 March 2009                           |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Townsend Drive<br>St Albans<br>AL3 5RP |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01727 868021                           |
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|---------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 11–16            |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 26–27 April 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 379452           |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb

Additional Inspector

Philippa Holliday

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 teachers teaching 15 lessons. Eight were joint observations with members of the leadership team. The lead inspector and the headteacher carried out an English work scrutiny. Inspectors met formally and informally with students. Meetings were held with staff and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a number of documents, including progress and attainment data, attendance figures, safeguarding policies and risk assessments, equality and diversity policies and the school improvement plan. They visited the breakfast club and attended an assembly. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also took account of 31 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and students.

## Information about the school

Batchwood School provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. A few students have additional special educational needs, including autistic spectrum disorder. Over 40% of students joined the school during years 7 to 9, rather than at the beginning of Key Stage 3, but mobility is decreasing. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most students are White British. A few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. There are a few looked after students. Childcare is provided on the school site at Lindees, an after-school club, though this is not managed by the governing body and was inspected separately. The school is involved in the national Special Educational Needs and Disability Pathfinder Initiative.

**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

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

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not better than that because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and students’ progress, and in the use of assessment to set suitably challenging learning outcomes for all students in English and mathematics lessons. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students’ achievement is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. They make good progress in science, art and design, and physical education. A few students attain above average GCSE passes in these subjects. Students make good progress on their vocational courses. All students secure college places or get jobs when they leave school.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. In science, art and design, and on the vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. However, in some English and mathematics lessons and in a few other subjects, students are not always sufficiently challenged. Teaching of reading is good, but opportunities to develop students writing and numeracy skills across all subjects are occasionally missed.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory and improving. Bullying and inappropriate incidents of behaviour are on the decline. Occasionally, a few students disrupt lessons in Years 8 and 10. Engagement with learning is mostly good, but a little inconsistency remains. Most students are adept at assessing risks and adopting safe practices, particularly in work-place environments.
- Since the last inspection, senior leaders and the governing body have improved students’ attendance, raised attainment for Key Stage 4 students and improved the curriculum. The management of performance is now more rigorous, especially in its effectiveness in monitoring behaviour and in providing targeted professional development to equip teachers to manage challenging behaviour

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more effectively. Recent monitoring of teaching identified that teachers do not always use assessment to consistently plan specific learning outcomes for students. Occasionally teachers are not held to account when they do not do so.

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

- Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - teachers use assessments consistently to set students specific and challenging learning outcomes lesson by lesson
  - teachers review students' progress towards these learning outcomes frequently and set them new learning outcomes once they are met
  - the senior leadership team holds teachers to account for monitoring students' progress towards these outcomes and setting new and challenging targets.
  
- Improve teaching by making sure that:
  - planned activities are consistently challenging and well matched to students' most important needs
  - the marking of students' work is consistently good and students are given the opportunity to work towards their writing targets in the work set for them
  - every opportunity is taken to develop students' writing and numeracy skills across all subjects.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. It is not better than that because work set for students in these subjects is not always consistently challenging. This is less positive than the view of most parents and carers who believe that their children make good progress. In science, art and design and physical education students make good progress. By Year 11, a few students attain above average GCSE passes in these subjects. Students' learning accelerates through Key Stage 4 because of the rigour of their accredited vocational courses. In 2011, the number of Year 11 students gaining higher-level qualifications increased compared with previous years. All Year 11 students secured a place at college or gained employment. The school's tracking system shows that current Year 11 students are on target to do even better. Although attainment at the end of Year 11 is below average, reflecting the low starting point of most students, standards are

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rising.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress in lessons. Students' progress is good in some lessons and in a few subjects, including science, it is consistently good. In a few English and mathematics lessons, and occasionally in some other subjects, insufficient use is made of assessment to plan specific learning outcomes relevant to the needs of each student. In these lessons, the level of challenge is not high enough. For example, in a Key Stage 3 mathematics lesson focusing on the use of data to solve a problem, all students worked on the same activity, yet a few of them had mastered the learning and were ready to move on to new learning. On this occasion, their progress slowed. Conversely, in a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson students made good progress because each had a specific planned, challenging outcome to achieve based on assessment of their prior learning and what each needed to learn next. In a very few English lessons, students are not provided with suitable activities to work towards their writing targets in order to make the improvements required.

Equality of opportunity is a core value. For example, every effort is made to accelerate the progress of the very few students reluctant to attend school regularly by enabling them to access high quality work-experience placements. These opportunities accelerate their progress and enable them to secure employment. Looked after students and the very few who speak English as an additional language achieve at least as well as their peers. However, the rate of progress made by students occasionally varies both within the same subject and across subjects. A recently launched approach to teaching literacy, at the start of each day, has raised students' achievement in reading. The promotion of students' writing and numeracy skills across all subjects is inconsistent.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers believe that their children are taught well and, while this is the case in some lessons, it is not consistently the case in all. Some students say that the teaching is variable. Inspection evidence confirms this. There is some inconsistency in the teaching of English and mathematics. Assessment, although satisfactory overall, is not always used effectively to plan specific challenging learning outcomes in lessons for each student. Students occasionally work for too long on a task to develop a skill already mastered and are not moved on quickly enough with new and important learning. This slows their progress. Marking is not always sufficiently helpful in helping students improve. In addition, work set is not always matched to students' key writing targets.

There are pockets of good teaching. The teaching of science and art and design is consistently good. Teaching of vocational subjects is strong and equips students with relevant job-readiness skills. Staff are very committed to equality of access and teachers never give up on a student. Relationships are positive and teachers go the extra mile to support students' learning, but a few inconsistencies remain. Teachers

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tailor creative individualised learning programmes to remove barriers to students' learning. Flexibility in curriculum planning ensures each student gains qualifications that are a passport to college or employment. Overall, teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. In art, students who have experienced bereavement are encouraged to express their feelings. On their catering course, students work in teams to prepare quality meals for members of a local rugby club. However in a few lessons opportunities to promote spiritual development and awareness of cultural diversity are missed. For example, in a mathematics lesson an opportunity to draw a connection between Islam and mathematics was missed.

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

Engagement with learning is mostly good, but there are a few inconsistencies. Very occasionally, when teaching is too adult-led, students sit passively. A few parents and carers of Year 8 and 10 students are concerned that their children's learning is sometimes disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. While students' behaviour in classes in these year groups is often good there are a few occasions when it is not. It is improving due to the success of the action taken by the senior leadership team. The school is usually calm and students are mostly polite, showing concern and respect for one another.

A few incidents of racism and homophobic bullying occur. They are tackled swiftly and effectively. Incidents of cyber bullying have fallen rapidly over the past two years because of the school's successful drive to raise students' awareness of its harmful effects. A very few students say, 'Sometimes other students poke fun at us because of our size'. They are determined to tackle this through the school's council. Students are actively involved in shaping the school's anti-bullying policy. Occasionally, fights break out but these are dealt with promptly. Short-term exclusions fell significantly last year; they are falling even faster this year.

Overwhelmingly, parents and carers say that their children are safe. Students feel safe. They all have an adult who they trust and with whom they can talk through matters which trouble them. They know about the importance of wearing protective clothing in certain work-place environments. They understand the risks of getting involved in gangs, the harmful effects of unsafe sex and that they must not talk with strangers in chat rooms when using computers. Attendance has improved significantly over the past two years. It is much higher than that typical of a school for students with behavioural difficulties and is very close to the national average for a mainstream secondary school.

### **Leadership and management**

Senior leaders and the governing body have successfully made a number of improvements since the last inspection. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is better and there are more vocational courses with suitable accreditation. Attendance is

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significantly better and behaviour has improved. Throughout this time the high quality of care for students and their families through links with health professionals, particularly in respect of mental health needs, and the Youth Offending Team has been sustained.

The capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and the scrutiny of work have improved. Professional development is targeted where it is most needed. However, the senior leadership team has not been consistently rigorous in holding teachers to account for implementing agreed changes to benefit students. For example, it is agreed policy that all teachers use assessment of students' prior learning to plan specific work which moves students on to the next important steps of learning. Some teachers do this, but not all. Although promoting equality and removing barriers to learning for students lie at the heart of this school, on rare occasions students are not enabled to reach their full potential. Consequently, equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Self-evaluation is robust and decisive actions emerge from this activity. For example, analysis of achievement in reading resulted in a decision to implement a reading session for students at the start of each day. Students' achievement in reading has improved significantly as a result.

The leaders and managers provide a curriculum that is broad, relevant and motivates students to learn. Students recognise that it supports them in developing important work-related skills and provides them with the qualifications required to become successful young adults. It promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students learn to work collaboratively through their vocational curriculum and their awareness of cultural diversity is mostly well-developed. Parents and carers are supported well. Management systems to ensure students are secure and safe are robust. Child protection procedures meet requirements and risk assessments, including risk assessments of students' behaviour, are thorough.



## 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      | 54  | 42   | 2            | 2          |
| Primary schools      | 14  | 49   | 32           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 20  | 39   | 34           | 7          |
| Special schools      | 33  | 45   | 20           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 9   | 55   | 28           | 8          |
| All schools          | 16  | 47   | 31           | 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 to 31 December 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.                    |
| Floor standards:           | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.  |
| 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.**

30 April 2012

Dear Students



**Inspection of Batchwood School, St Albans, AL3 5RP.**

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. Your school is satisfactory and this means that another inspector may visit to see if improvements are made.

- By the end of Year 11, you achieve qualifications which enable you to go to college or get good jobs. You are equipped well with good work-related skills. You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. You make good progress in science, art and design and physical education and get good GCSE passes in these subjects. You learn to manage your own behaviour well.
- Almost all of you attend regularly. You feel safe and trust your teachers and teaching assistants. Bullying incidents are rare. Most of you are keen to behave well. However, a few of you in Years 8 and 10 sometimes misbehave in lessons and when this happens it is not fair on your classmates because it interferes with their learning. You know how to keep yourselves safe in the work-place and understand that getting involved in a gang would get you into trouble.
- Teaching is mostly satisfactory in English and mathematics. It is good in science, art, physical education and on your vocational programmes. We have asked your teachers to always set you challenging and interesting activities, which support you in doing your very best in all lessons. We have particularly asked them to set each of you challenging learning outcomes in your English and mathematics lessons. We want them to raise your achievement in these subjects and prepare you even better to cope with the challenge of being successful in the adult world.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work successfully to make improvements for you. We have asked that they speed up actions to improve teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, to accelerate your progress in those subjects and improve the marking of your work. Also we have asked your headteacher to check that your teachers always use assessments of what you need to learn, in order to plan more effectively to raise your achievement.

Please help your school to improve by attending regularly, behaving sensibly and doing your very best work in all of your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb  
Lead inspector

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