

Bents Green School

Ringinglow Road, Sheffield, S11 7TB

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Significant changes have been introduced by the new headteacher. These changes are heading in the right direction. They have not yet attended fully to the decline in pupils' learning since the last inspection in order to show good achievement over time.
- Overall, pupils make the progress expected from their starting points. Few make better than expected progress. Progress in mathematics is better than in reading and writing. Too little information is available about progress in science and other subjects.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to be as independent as they can be.
- Expectations for what pupils can do are sometimes too low and teachers do not check well enough how well pupils are learning.
- The school's behaviour policy is not applied consistently enough. Information about pupils' behaviour is not used well enough.
- The school's approach to improve pupils' literacy is new and is not consistently implemented for all pupils and across all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good. Close monitoring and training that is matched to the needs of the school and individual staff, have brought about improvements.
- Good relationships with staff help pupils when they find their work difficult.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for when they leave school.
- The school is an orderly place where pupils feel safe and confident.
- Parents are pleased with the school's work.
- The school meets and often exceeds the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was a no-notice inspection whereby the school was informed of the inspection shortly before the arrival of the inspectors.
- Sixteen lessons were observed and pupils' learning and progress were also evaluated by looking at their work and through case studies.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, other members of the senior leadership team, two members of the governing body, teachers, teaching assistants and a representative of the local authority. The views of staff were obtained through a questionnaire completed by 55 staff. Pupils' views were gained in meetings with three groups, including members of the school council, and informal conversations with other pupils during the inspection. The views of parents and carers were obtained from 15 responses to the Parent View survey, four parents who wrote to inspectors and from the school's own annual survey of parents' views. A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's data about pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, the school's monitoring of teaching, attendance data and from individual pupils' records.

Inspection team

Charlie Henry, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Yaxley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Scott	Social Care Inspector
Jim Alexander	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bents Green School is a school for pupils who have language and communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders. Nearly all pupils have moderate learning difficulties.
- Pupils are placed at the school if they are deemed to be emotionally, socially or behaviourally too vulnerable to thrive in a mainstream school setting.
- The school moved into a new building in 2011. It does not use an alternative provision to supplement the work undertaken within the school.
- There is residential provision for 20 pupils. Most students stay in this provision for one or two nights each week. The last social care inspection was on 20 October 2011 and judged the provision to be outstanding.
- The governing body has recently increased its size and is now complete.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - using available national information to set ambitious, realistic targets for all pupils based on their starting points
 - regular and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress toward achieving these targets and, where off-track, reviewing the effectiveness of teaching and support arrangements
 - implementing the literacy strategy effectively in all lessons so that pupils make better than expected progress in their reading and writing.
- Improve teaching by:
 - having clear targets for exactly what teachers want each pupil to learn in each lesson, based on careful monitoring of previous lessons and the pupils' starting points
 - careful planning for how teachers and teaching assistants will make sure the pupils will achieve their targets
 - closely monitoring how well pupils are learning in lessons, providing them with detailed written and oral feedback about how well they are doing and guidance about what they need to do to improve further
 - using homework to support and extend learning.
- Improve behaviour and safety by:
 - undertaking a thorough analysis of incidents of good and poor behaviour
 - the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy by all staff
 - reviewing the use of rewards to encourage good behaviour.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - carefully checking each pupil's progress, according to their age and starting point
 - ensuring all leaders and managers play a full part in checking that school-wide policies and strategies are consistently implemented to a high standard, their impact on pupils' progress is evaluated thoroughly and further improvements are made as necessary
 - undertaking an independent review of governance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The school's information about pupils' progress shows that, over time, most pupils make the progress expected from their starting points. The rate of progress has increased recently as result of improved teaching. However, fewer make more than expected progress, especially in reading and writing, than would be needed for it to be judged as good achievement. The quality of information about pupils' progress has improved since the appointment of the new headteacher.
- Pupils make more progress in mathematics than in reading and writing, where the recently introduced approach to literacy teaching is not yet effective in all lessons. Too little information is available about the progress in science and other subjects over time.
- There are no identified differences in the progress made by groups of pupils with different abilities, nor by those at risk of underachievement. Students in the post-16 classes do as well as younger pupils.
- Pupils make good progress in other areas that will be valuable when they leave school, including, especially, their communication and social skills, and in gaining a range of practical skills that they could study after leaving school.
- Pupils make most progress when they are set ambitious targets and when there is careful monitoring by and help from their teachers to make sure they are on-track to reach these goals.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved and is now good, occasionally it is outstanding but some requires improvement. This improved picture is the result of the headteacher's emphasis on improvement since she joined the school. The variable quality of lessons is evident from the school's own observation, lessons observed during the inspection and from pupils' work.
- Pupils learn best when teachers have a very clear understanding of what they want each pupil to learn and carefully match their work accordingly. Teachers closely monitor how well pupils are learning, including those working with teaching assistants. Staff ask questions that find out exactly what each pupil understands so that they can provide further support if needed or can push them on when they are ready.
- Teachers encourage their pupils to work quickly and this helps them to be enthusiastic as they are frequently praised and look forward to the next task.
- Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants and this helps them remain confident when they find their work difficult. However, marking and other feedback are not detailed enough so that pupils do not always have a good enough understanding of what they need to do to improve further.
- Pupils do not make enough progress when expectations are too low and where they are not challenged enough to do better or to work independently. In some lessons, teachers and teaching assistants provide too much help and others pupils have to wait needlessly to take their turn.
- Teachers do not consistently use the school's new approach to improving literacy in all lessons. Reading and writing targets are set for each pupil based on their levels of knowledge, however, teachers do not always use this information well and miss many opportunities for learning.
- Homework is not usually set. This is a missed opportunity to extend learning that takes place in school. Only about a half of the parents who replied to Parent View thought that appropriate homework was set.
- All parents who responded to Parent View thought their children were taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The school is an orderly place and pupils feel safe. Pupils move around school at the change of lessons and at lunchtime in a sensible way, talking to one another and to staff as they do so, in a friendly and sociable manner. While there are some incidents of poor behaviour these relate to the pupils' special educational needs and are not frequent. Students in the post 16- classes respond well to increased responsibility and reduced supervision.
- Pupils' behaviour improves while they are at school, however insufficiently detailed monitoring restricts the analysis that can be made. This limits further improvement, for example, to understand why restraint does not decrease enough for older pupils who have been at the school for a longer time. The school is aware of the need to look more carefully for patterns of pupils' behaviour that will help develop effective improvement strategies.
- A few parents and some staff raised questions about the standard of pupils' behaviour. However, inspectors found no evidence to suggest that there were significant concerns.
- The school's behaviour policy has been reviewed recently but staff do not apply it consistently. Pupils are very clear about the consequences of any poor behaviour. The policy is not detailed enough about rewards for good behaviour.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in avoiding or effectively de-escalating difficult situations. Where necessary pupils can either ask to go to or be asked to go to a calm area outside of the classroom. While pupils are required to continue their work in this area they are not always returned to work in class as quickly as possible.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is some bullying but it is not frequent and that they are confident that any concerns are attended to by staff. Pupils are taught about how to avoid and deal with any incidents of cyber bullying.
- No parents who responded to Parent View expressed concern about bullying. Almost all thought that their children were well cared for and were safe.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has introduced a number of significant changes to improve pupils' achievements and the quality of their education. For example, policies for behaviour management and literacy development are taking the school in the right direction. The headteacher knows that these policies need to be reviewed to make sure that they lead to pupils' good learning and behaviour.
- The most effective improvement so far has involved the quality of teaching. Lesson observations have been improved and extended, and are linked closely to training and setting targets for teachers. Although there remains variation in quality of lessons the overall picture is stronger, and as a result pupils' progress has increased.
- The additional funding provided for pupils at risk of underachievement is used to provide additional speech and language therapy. The progress made by these pupils is as good as by other pupils.
- The school's self-evaluation provides detailed analysis and is the basis for the school improvement plan. However, self-evaluation is limited due to the lack of robust and reliable information about pupils' progress before 2011. Targets for pupils' learning are not based on good achievement. Pupil progress data is now moderated with other schools to ensure its accuracy.
- The curriculum is good and prepares pupils effectively for the next stage in their education. It is suitably flexible so that the needs of individual pupils can be met and includes an important element of personal and social development. The post-16 curriculum provides a range of vocational experiences from which students are prepared better for their choices after leaving school.

- The findings of the Parent View questionnaire are consistent with those obtained by the school’s own annual survey. Almost of those who responded would recommend the school to other parents.
- The local authority is aware of the areas where the school requires improvement and provides effective support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Provides a strong strategic lead for the school.
 - Has ensured that statutory responsibilities are met, including training and recruitment checks to ensure that children are safeguarded.
 - Has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the ways by which the headteacher is using training and setting targets where required.
 - Provides effective challenge for the school’s improvement of pupils’ behaviour but does not hold the school sufficiently to account for pupils’ progress and the standards they reach.
 - Governors are aware that weakness in the school’s data has not provided adequate information to fulfil this responsibility.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is outstanding
Residential pupils’ safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	is outstanding

- The children receive a consistently high standard of care which fully meets, and often exceeds the requirements of the Residential Special Schools' National Minimum Standards. The residential experience and the excellent quality of care make a significant impact on the educational, personal and social development of children.
- The children are strong ambassadors for the school and show an immense respect for their school community. They are very positive about their overnight stays, describing them as 'lots of fun'.
- Staff work very hard to ensure children benefit from their experiences. A wide range of stimulating activities allows each child to follow their personal interests and develop their independence. Children take advantage of these opportunities with great enthusiasm.
- Highly personalised planning and care demonstrates a commitment to equality and diversity. Staff care for the children’s individual needs exceptionally well. They make every effort to get to know the children and, as a result, are able to provide the right support and guidance at just the right time.
- Staff have high aspirations for the children. They are enthusiastic and skilled and make the residential provision an extremely positive place. As a result, the children make excellent progress, and grow in confidence and independence. This prepares them well for their futures.
- Relationships between children and staff are warm and friendly. Each child is made to feel valued and respected. All aspects of their stay provide children with the opportunity to make friendships. Children say they look forward to spending time with their friends.
- Safety is given a high priority. Children are well protected and feel safe. Individual risks and vulnerabilities are assessed and risk management and safeguarding practices are rigorous. Behaviour is very good; children are courteous and polite. Staff are very successful at managing behaviour positively and are skilled at defusing any difficulties that arise, for example when a child feels anxious or upset. This minimises the need for any physical restraint.
- Leadership and management are very strong. Qualified and experienced managers ensure staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities for providing high quality care. There is a strong

culture of continuous improvement. All staff are enthusiastic and are extremely excited about the future plans for the care setting.

- Effective action has been taken to address the area for improvement raised at the last inspection. Monitoring of the residential provision enables the accurate identification of strengths and areas for improvement. Action is taken to attend to any shortfalls.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	107169
Social care unique reference number	SC003049
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	409928

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	30
Number of boarders on roll	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Craig Sutherland
Headteacher	Jan Wiggins
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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