

Bensham Manor

Ecclesbourne Road, Thornton Heath, CR7 7BN

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The passionate leadership of the headteacher is driving rapid improvement in both learning and personal development.
- Achievement is good for all groups including those on the autistic spectrum.
- Teaching is good and some of it is outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons well and, through a wide range of activities, help students to achieve well.
- Students make good progress in developing skills in literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- Teachers and support staff help students to develop communication and social skills that help them become more independent.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and prepares the students well for life beyond the school.
- Behaviour in the school is outstanding. Staff have a caring and supportive approach that enables students to feel safe, learn social skills and develop self-confidence.
- Students enjoy coming to school. They take pride in their school and behave exceptionally well in lessons. Students who come to the school with difficulties in behaviour make excellent progress in improving it.
- The governing body is well informed about what the school does and provides effective challenge and support to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some subject leaders do not use information about students' achievements to full advantage to show how well students are doing in comparison with the national picture in order to improve teaching.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not always used sufficiently well across the curriculum to help students to learn independently.
- In a few lessons teachers do not make best use of information gained from assessing students' progress to plan the next steps of learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons. Four of these were joint lesson observations with senior leaders.
- A meeting was held with a group of students from Years 8 to 11. Meeting were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 10 responses to Parent View and the school’s own questionnaire survey of views of parents and carers. The lead inspector held a telephone discussion with a parent who contacted the inspection team.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation including policies, the school’s self-evaluation and its development plan, documents used by leaders to check the school’s work, teachers’ planning files, progress records and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Peter Gabony, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ann Sydney

Additional Inspector

Kate Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bensham Manor is a larger than average special school which caters for students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs.
- All of the students have a statement of special educational needs.
- About 40% of the students have moderate learning difficulties and a similar, and increasing, proportion is on the autistic spectrum.
- The proportion of students eligible to be supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is above average. There are no students from service families in the school.
- The students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the make up of the borough. About half are of White British heritage and about one fifth is from Black Caribbean or African heritages.
- Some students spend time in local mainstream colleges to follow vocational courses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - all subject leaders compare the progress of students with those nationally and use this information to improve the quality of teaching
 - students use ICT across the curriculum to enable them to be as independent as possible in their learning
 - in all lessons teachers make best use information about students' progress to plan the next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students is well below national average when they enter the school. The low starting point for all students means that, although they learn and develop well as a result of good teaching, their attainment remains low compared to students nationally.
- Students make good progress in mathematics and particularly good progress in English. Rates of progress are improving in both subjects and students achieve well in GCSEs and other qualifications considering their starting points. Students are not entered early for GCSE examinations.
- The school's drive to improve literacy levels results in students making enhanced progress in this area. By the time students leave school many are reading with confidence and fluency. Less able students have developed the ability to recognise letters and sounds and put them together to read.
- The school regularly checks the progress of all individuals and groups. All groups achieve equally well, including boys and girls and those of ethnic minority heritage. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority attain in line with their classmates in both English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in a wide range of academic, vocational and creative subjects.
- Students make good progress in developing communication and social skills. The growing number of students on the autistic spectrum learn how to socialise and communicate with others and develop growing flexibility in their behaviour, as a result of good teaching that meets their specific needs.
- Older students develop personal and vocational skills through attendance at local colleges and personalised work experience programmes. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of education, training and employment and most gain entry onto college courses when they leave.
- Students become increasingly independent as they grow older. A high proportion of them have learned to travel independently and have gained cycling proficiency badges.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. It is being improved as a result of guidance and support from senior leaders and is leading to even better outcomes for all groups of students.
- Students enjoy coming to school and take full advantage of the options available to them as they pass through the school. They enjoy caring and positive relationships with staff who help them to develop self-confidence and resilience.
- Teachers use lessons effectively as an opportunity to teach students on the autistic spectrum to work alongside others in social settings so that they learn well to work as part of a group. Lessons are exciting because teachers use a wide range of approaches and resources to motivate students. As a result, they develop extremely positive attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons is excellent.
- Teachers create many opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills, such as measuring in technology lessons, buying items when shopping and telling the time. Teaching of English is particularly effective and students learn to read and write in a variety of different settings.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and usually set work that is matched to their ability. In a few lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of information about students' progress when setting work which will lead students on to the next steps in their learning

against their personal targets. At all times, teachers ensure that work is appropriate to the age of the students and thereby promote maturity and self-esteem.

- Verbal and written feedback to students is encouraging and constructive. Marking of work is helpful and lets students know what they have to do to improve further.
- Students are successfully taught to work as part of a group and also to work independently. While students gain a range of skills as a result of good teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, there are insufficient opportunities to put them into practice by learning independently in other subjects.
- For older students, the curriculum offers a wide choice of courses, many of them accredited. This enables students to take responsibility for, and personalise, their learning. Art and other creative subjects are taught very well and many students achieve a good level of success in these courses. The school has a well-planned work-related programme that enables students to experience work in areas that match their interests and abilities.
- In the good sixth form, students are taught well and gain qualifications on courses that introduce them to the world of work and prepare them for further study. For example, one student with a passion for books enjoyed a successful work experience at a local library.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The warmth and positive regard with which all staff treat the students enables them to offer advice and guidance that is listened to and acted upon. Students take pride in their school and treat adults and each other with courtesy and respect.
- Students develop extremely positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, their behaviour and safety both in school and off site are outstanding. In lessons, students' behaviour is excellent and students are involved and interested in their learning. Across the school they are proud of their achievements and strive to do as well as they can.
- Students report that they enjoy lessons and, as a result, attendance and punctuality are good. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that there is a high standard of behaviour in the school. Students report that feel safe at school and that the rare instances of bullying are well dealt with.
- As the school caters for growing numbers of students with complex needs, many of these arrive showing challenging behaviours. The school assesses their personal as well as academic needs carefully, then uses rewards and other support highly effectively. As a result, these students improve their ability to manage their own behaviour exceptionally well.
- Staff receive good training that enables them to manage difficult situations positively and with confidence. Consequently, the use of exclusions is low and this is very successfully supported by the school's reward systems.
- Planning for the improvement of behaviour is thorough and good links are made with external agencies to provide effective support for students both in and out of school.

The leadership and management are good

- The dynamic leadership of the headteacher is ensuring rapid improvement. He has a clear vision of how the school needs to develop and translates this into high expectations of staff performance and well-focused plans.
- The senior leadership team is committed, enthusiastic and well informed. It provides effective support to the headteacher in his focus on continual improvement in all areas of academic and personal performance. As a result, teaching is good and rates of progress are improving in all subjects.
- The headteacher and staff are committed to creating equality of opportunity by tackling any discrimination and giving the students the best possible chances to succeed in life.

- The school evaluates its performance accurately and comprehensively. It uses its findings to produce plans and actions that are leading to continuous improvement. Staff, parents and other stakeholders are kept well informed and support the plans.
 - Subject leaders are knowledgeable and improving in effectiveness. However, they do not yet use the information about students' progress to best effect to check how well they are doing against the national picture and, in turn, help to improve teaching.
 - Leaders have improved and widened the curriculum in order to meet the changing needs of the students. It provides stimulating experiences and learning opportunities across academic, creative and practical subjects.
 - Parents and carers are extremely positive in their praise for the development and improvement of the school. They are especially appreciative of the way that staff keep them informed, work with them and show flexibility in meeting the personal needs of each student.
 - The school makes good use of the student premium in order to provide additional support, such as individual counselling and additional support for communication. It monitors closely the progress of students eligible for this funding and targets its support accordingly.
 - The local authority provides light touch support to this good and improving school.
 - The school fully meets requirements of safeguarding of students. It carries out the necessary checks on all staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and all staff receive the appropriate training and guidance. Staff are caring and monitor closely the well-being of all students.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is knowledgeable, well organised and has a wide range of skills. It asks challenging questions of the headteacher and senior staff. Governors gain an accurate first-hand view of the school through their regular visits. The governing body understands the strengths of the school and the areas in which it needs to develop further. The support that it provides the school is appreciated by senior leaders. The governing body is fully aware of teaching standards and their impact on how well students are doing. It closely monitors the use of performance management and the extent to which the headteacher recognises and rewards good teachers through salary progression and tackles underperformance. The governing body manages its budget well and supported the headteacher in acquiring extensive funding in order to make substantial improvements to the buildings and learning environment. It monitors closely the school's use of the student premium to provide additional support for the more disadvantaged students.
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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>

School details

Unique reference number	101851
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	404785

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Sparks
Headteacher	Philip Poulton
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 May 2011
Telephone number	020 8684 0116
Fax number	020 86831301
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