

Barley Lane School

Barley Lane, Exeter, EX4 1TA

Inspection dates 23–24 April 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has very successfully created a calm and ordered environment where staff and pupils feel safe and good learning can take place.
- Staff are proud of working at the school and very committed to helping the pupils to succeed.
- Senior leaders, including governors, monitor the work of the school very well and have successfully raised achievement and improved the quality of teaching. Development planning is strong.
- Relationships are very good and teachers and support staff have good skills in managing problematic behaviour. As a result, lessons proceed smoothly, pupils try hard and are keen to join in with all activities.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the good progress which their children make in improving their attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils learn well because teaching is good, with some outstanding teaching. Teachers are good at explaining new topics to pupils and asking the right questions to make sure that they understand.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well, with some outstanding achievement in Key Stage 4, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE).
- Outcomes for pupils are good, with virtually all Year 11 leavers moving on successfully to colleges of further education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a very few lessons teachers do not always set work at exactly the right level for individual pupils and marking, particularly in the secondary school, does not always show pupils exactly what they have to do to gain better marks.
- Attendance has improved well. However, the attendance of a few pupils is too low.
- Although pupils are generally supported very well in lessons, there are a few instances where they are given too much support so they do not have the chance to work things out for themselves.
- Curriculum planning does not always provide enough opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through the other subjects of the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, of which five were joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils from the Key Stage 2 unit and a group of secondary aged pupils.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, the headteacher and the senior leadership team.
- Telephone discussions were conducted with the school’s improvement partner and with the local authority’s senior officer for special educational needs.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and also looked at the school’s surveys of parents’ and carers’ views.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding practices, improvement planning, pupils’ progress files, assessment information and documents related to the performance management of staff (the setting and reviewing of targets to help them to improve their work).
- The inspectors analysed the 30 questionnaires which were returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at pupils’ work and heard six pupils read.
- The inspectors looked in detail at the systems for improving the pupils’ behaviour and observed behaviour at lunchtime, in lessons and around the school.

Inspection team

Christine Emerson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Barley Lane School is a special school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school serves the whole of Devon, with a few pupils from the Plymouth local authority.
- The school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) for around half of the total number of pupils. This is high in comparison with the national average.
- In September 2011, the school began to admit a small number of pupils in Years 3 to 6 and, in September 2012, a three class Key Stage 2 unit was established.
- In 2012, Barley Lane, together with the other special schools in the local authority, formed the SENTient Trust. This is a cooperative trust which works to benefit all its members by, for example, appointing a business manager to work across the schools.
- The school works with two alternative providers, Exeter College and Combe Pafford (a special school in Torbay), to offer practical courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that work set is always matched exactly to the levels of individual pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work independently and to solve problems for themselves
 - ensuring that marking of pupils' work always shows pupils exactly what they have to do to improve their work and move to the next level.
- Improve achievement in literacy and numeracy by ensuring it is consistently promoted well in all subjects.
- Work closely with the parents and carers of the small group of poor attenders to improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils have low attainment on entry because they have not learned well enough as a result of their problematic behaviour. However, they quickly re-engage with learning and make good progress in lessons. They achieve well, irrespective of their disabilities or special educational needs even though attainment remains below average at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress in learning to read because phonics (the sounds made by letters) is taught well. Secondary-aged pupils extend their skills in reading and writing well in English lessons and achievement in English is good. Nevertheless, there are not always enough planned opportunities to develop literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Achievement in mathematics is good overall, with some pupils in Key Stage 2 making very good progress. Achievement in the secondary school has improved, with a few pupils now gaining GCSE passes at grade C. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Achievement in Year 11 is particularly good because pupils respond very well to individual coaching sessions. GCSE results have improved very well over the last three years with most pupils now gaining six or seven GCSEs at A* to G. This year the number of passes at grade C or above has risen significantly, particularly in ICT and PE. Achievement in ICT is exceptionally good with several pupils on track to achieve an A*.
- The school's policy of entering pupils early for GCSE works well and enables pupils to gain more GCSEs at higher grades. Pupils also gain qualifications in practical subjects, such as catering. This very good achievement enhances the pupils' life chances very well.
- Pupil premium funds help to provide well-targeted support, such as after-school tuition. This ensures that pupils supported through the pupil premium attain as well as other pupils in both English and mathematics.
- Outcomes are good. A very small minority of pupils integrate successfully back to mainstream schools, whilst the vast majority remain at the school until the end of Year 11 and move on successfully to further education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers are very effective in establishing a positive climate for learning with high expectations for learning and behaviour, for example responding quickly to any swearing. The pupils respond well to this and there is very little disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects which they teach and are skilled at explaining new concepts to the pupils. Questions are used well to check how much pupils understand and to plan the next stage of learning.
- Learning objectives are shared well with pupils so that they know exactly what they have to do and what they are aiming to achieve.
- Work is generally well adapted so that it is at just the right level for individual pupils. Very occasionally this does not happen and, consequently, the pace of learning slows.
- Lessons are interesting and pupils enjoy the good variety of well-planned activities. This keeps them motivated and keen to learn.
- Teachers and support staff are very skilled at improving pupils' achievement through individual interventions. This is particularly evident in Year 11, where individual coaching is improving pupils' GCSE results very well.
- Team work is very strong and teachers and support staff work very effectively together. Pupils are generally given very good individual support in lessons. Very occasionally staff do too much for them. When this happens it prevents pupils from learning how to work things out for themselves.

- All written work is marked with positive comments which often include suggestions as to how to make the work better. On occasions marking, particularly in the secondary department, does not show clearly enough the level at which pupils are working and exactly what they have to do to improve.
- Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the pupils and are skilled at consistently using the school's reward systems to motivate pupils to try their best, complete work set and behave well in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There are strong procedures in place to manage pupils' behaviour which are well linked to raising achievement. For example, the rewards which are earned for meeting learning targets cannot be achieved if behaviour is poor. Pupils understand the procedures well and say that they help them to improve their behaviour.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong with an excellent focus on helping the pupils to learn good moral values and to make the right choices. Staff model appropriate behaviour exceptionally well and deal with disruptive behaviour very calmly. As a result, pupils make good progress in telling right from wrong and managing their own behaviour.
- Pupils, parents and most staff think that behaviour is good and this view is shared by the inspectors. In the school's surveys there are a number of positive comments from parents celebrating how their children's behaviour has improved. For example, one parent said, 'Behaviour is greatly improved at home.....I can't praise the school enough, everyone comments on the improvements in him – friends and neighbours.'
- Pupils respond well to the very good relationships which they have with staff and generally behave well in lessons, try hard and join in with discussions and activities. An example of this was in a good PE lesson for pupils in Key Stage 2, where the pupils behaved sensibly, responded quickly to instructions, took turns and shared equipment. Although they were very excited by the activities, which included running round the hall and striking balls to each other, they still behaved very well.
- Behaviour around the school and at lunchtime is good. Staff are very vigilant at watching for signs of any type of bullying. Pupils all say that they feel safe at school, that there is little bullying, and that it is quickly dealt with. They understand different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying, and make good progress in learning how to stay safe.
- Attendance has improved well, but there are still a few pupils who do not attend well enough.
- The number of serious incidents and physical restraints has fallen noticeably because the good systems to manage behaviour are well established throughout the school. The number of fixed term exclusions, which is also going down, is still relatively high because of a few pupils with very problematic behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has maintained the dedicated leadership and highly visible presence around the school which was praised at the previous inspection. For example, the way in which he greets all the pupils personally when they arrive each morning sets a very good example to other staff and provides a very good start to the pupils' day.
- Senior leaders are effective and the staff team are very committed to try to provide the best education for the pupils in their care. As a result, the school has improved well since the previous inspection, as is demonstrated by pupils' better achievement and improved teaching. School development planning is strong and being used effectively to move the school forward.
- The Key Stage 2 unit is working well, and effective steps have been taken to support and

establish the new lead teacher who co-ordinates the work of the unit.

- Monitoring of all aspects of the school's work is now very rigorous and monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough, accurate and linked well to salary progression through performance management. Senior leaders provide good support for teachers whose teaching is less than consistently good. This is improving teaching well, although there are some remaining inconsistencies.
 - The curriculum has a good balance of practical activities and learning key skills, such as English, mathematics and ICT. Older pupils are prepared well to move on to college through following practical courses such as catering at specialist centres. Although numeracy and literacy are an agreed focus across the curriculum, there is variability in how well they are promoted in different subjects.
 - Safeguarding procedures are very rigorous and meet all current statutory requirements. Pupils' welfare is promoted very well through very strong links with agencies such as social care and with parents and carers. The school reaches out to parents, for example through conducting home visits where necessary.
 - Staff take a strong stand against any type of discrimination and pupils make good progress in learning to respect others. Equality of opportunity is promoted well.
 - The school has received a variety of suitable support from the local authority including good and sustained support from the school's improvement partner.
 - The school is beginning to benefit from the SENTient Trust through having more autonomy and flexibility in how it manages resources.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have good expertise. Some governors have done extensive training to improve their skills in aspects of governance such as monitoring the school budget. Governors visit the school regularly and know it well. They have a good understanding of how pupils' progress is tracked and how well the pupils are doing. Governors monitor the performance of teachers closely and have been very pro-active in insisting that pay awards are linked properly to performance. They have challenged the school determinedly to ensure that salary structures, for example for the new Key Stage 2 leader, are sustainable within the school's budget. They monitor the use of pupil premium funds and check that these are helping to raise achievement.
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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	113636
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401378

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Vanessa Newcombe
Headteacher	Mr Michael MacCourt
Date of previous school inspection	12–14 January 2010
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