

Bettridge School

Warden Hill Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 3AT

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Bettridge School is a very happy school that continues to improve. It provides learners with an outstanding quality of education that meets all the needs of every pupil extremely well.
- All staff are committed to the continual development of their own and the pupils' skills. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress in all subjects, and parents and carers say this progress is 'beyond their wildest dreams'.
- Teaching is always at least good, and often outstanding. Staff expect the best of the pupils and work hard to get them to achieve as much as possible.
- Attention to the pupils' safety and well-being is paramount. Through their words and actions, all staff constantly show their care and dedication to pupils and their families, so that pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The excellent range of activities, coupled with skilful management of the pupils by staff, means that pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- The sixth form is outstanding and provides an excellent education. The students are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their lives.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body provide an exceptionally high-quality leadership and management. There is a constant focus on improving teaching and learning, and raising achievement.
- Parents and carers like the school and say that it has 'done wonders' for their children. They find the staff approachable, with teachers who 'feel more like a close friend than a teacher'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by 13 different teachers.
- All of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors heard pupils from different classes read in their lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and parents and carers.
- The inspectors looked at assessment information, statements of special educational needs, attendance information, the school's development plan, the school's monitoring information, a wide range of policies including safeguarding, and governing body documentation.
- There were 23 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. The inspectors examined 49 staff questionnaires, which were taken into account by inspectors, along with the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Cook

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Just under half the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, and some have additional complex medical conditions. The rest of the population have severe learning difficulties or autism, or a combination of both.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, are above average. There are no children from service families currently attending the school.
- All Year 7 pupils are eligible for the additional government money to assist them to catch-up in literacy and numeracy.
- Since the last inspection, the school has moved into a new building, a new headteacher was appointed in April 2011, the senior leadership team has been reorganised and a new assistant headteacher has been recruited. The number of pupils has increased by a fifth.
- The school makes use of alternative provision at St James Primary and Bournside Comprehensive Schools, where a few pupils attend, accompanied by members of staff, in order to experience learning in a mainstream environment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase further the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - all staff use signing, symbols and objects of reference consistently throughout the day to assist pupils' communication.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The pupils' special educational needs and disabilities mean that all pupils are working well below the levels of other pupils of the same age.
- The pupils and all the parents and carers who were interviewed or who responded to the questionnaire agreed that pupils make very good progress. Parents and carers typically say, 'The school has done wonders with my son – we're amazed at his reading and writing. We never thought he would be able to do so much.'
- Staff plan skilfully and carefully for the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and rapidly gain the trust and confidence of parents and carers. In this way, the children make excellent progress that stands them in excellent stead as they move up into the main school.
- Pupils make very strong progress in their ability to communicate because throughout the day almost all staff provide opportunities to practise these skills, often through sign, symbols, gestures and facial expressions.
- The excellent progress they make in communication is a key factor in the pupils' very strong personal development. Pupils gain a much clearer understanding of the world around them and are able to signify more easily what they like and do not like.
- The school's records and observations of lessons show that the majority of pupils make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make excellent progress in reading because of the high-quality, structured, individualised support they receive, and because they are given plenty of opportunities to read aloud throughout the day.
- The expert teaching for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and arrangements to record, capture and build upon even the smallest steps forward, mean that these pupils make excellent progress.
- Specialist teaching and management strategies for pupils who have autism or severe learning difficulties mean that they gain confidence and resilience, and make excellent progress.
- Students make excellent progress in the sixth form because of the increased opportunities they enjoy to gain further independence outside school in real situations, such as shopping in the supermarket.
- Students achieve extremely well in a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications in which they gain further skills, for example in personal development and communication, and experience that they can take forward to the next stage of their lives. The school does not enter pupils early for GCSE.
- Pupils known to be eligible for Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium money learn at the same exceptionally fast rate as other students. This is because the additional funds are well used to give extra personal support to those pupils, for example in managing their own behaviour or in promoting their communication skills.
- There is no discernible difference between the achievements of any groups of pupils such as age groups or between that of boys and girls.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Senior leaders' records of teaching observations show that in the past two years, the quality of teaching has rarely fallen below 'good' and a significant amount of teaching is outstanding. This was the case with the teaching observed during the inspection. What makes teaching so consistently strong is the dedication and commitment that all staff have to promoting pupils' well-being as well as to their learning.
- Parents and carers recognise this dedication and many say how lucky they feel to have their children being taught at the school. One parent, typical of many, wrote, 'The teaching I have

witnessed is individually tailored and inspired. Without it, my son would not be in the stimulating full-time education that he is.'

- Classrooms at Bettridge are full of the buzz of intense, purposeful learning brought about by very skilled teachers and additional adults who know the pupils very well, and know what specialist strategies are required for the pupils to achieve rapid progress.
- Staff always treat the pupils as individuals, as can be seen in the planning for lessons and for managing unpredictable behaviour. These plans build upon detailed records of the progress each pupil has made in previous lessons. This information is gathered assiduously throughout the day by both teachers and support staff, often with photographs and video.
- Staff encourage the development of communication, reading, writing, numeracy and social skills at all times of the school day, including breaks and lunchtimes. Very good use is made of new technology, such as interactive whiteboards, and assistive technology such as communication switches.
- Nearly all staff consistently provide signing, symbols and objects of reference to help pupils understand what is being said. Their use shows the pupils that it is important that they themselves use these cues as they are valued by all the school community. A few staff do not do this consistently thereby occasionally holding back progress.
- Staff expect a lot from pupils in lessons, encouraging them to take risks and to try to go another step further in their learning. They give lots of positive feedback and show their heartfelt joy when a pupil makes a great leap forward, for example by maintaining eye contact for much longer than before.
- There is superb teamwork within classrooms, often involving health professionals, including the school nurse and physiotherapists. Speech therapists play their part for younger pupils, but there is no provision available for these professionals to support the individual speech and language programmes for pupils of secondary age. This is a justifiable concern to all parents and carers. To plug this gap, staff willingly undertake training with health professionals and therapists to ensure therapy is available to pupils whenever needed.
- Almost all pupils participate joyously in lessons because they like the people who work with them and care for them, and because the activities are at the right level to motivate them. As a result, pupils are enthralled and concentrate for long periods. Very occasionally, pupils' interest wanes if the teacher spends too long talking to the whole class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- When pupils walk into the school in the morning, and receive the warmest of welcomes from staff and their friends, the intent look on their faces is strong evidence that they enjoy coming to school and are looking forward to what the day will bring. Arrival time is a great example of the very special care taken to manage pupils when they move from one activity to the next.
- Relationships right through the school are excellent; all the stakeholders – pupils, parents, carers and staff – get on extremely well with each other, as was seen in surveys, meetings and throughout the inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good, because of the tenderness and tolerance displayed by staff when pupils become upset. All staff have received high-quality training in how to calm pupils down quickly if they begin to lose control and return them to learning quickly.
- For those pupils whose behaviour is unpredictable, such as those with autism, staff have developed a full array of specialist strategies that reduce anxiety and maximise the time pupils spend learning.
- In the meetings and through surveys, parents and carers frequently tell of how their home lives have been transformed by what the school has provided, both in the classroom and through 'fantastic' support at home. As one parent put it, 'Two years ago, my son was very aggressive and facing permanent exclusion. At Bettridge, he is now happy, positively engages with all staff and peers, and has 100% attendance. This is down to the school working brilliantly with us and

giving him staff he knows and respects.'

- The school makes the pupils' safety a very high priority. Parents, carers and pupils insist that there is no bullying at the school, and the school's records support their view. All pupils surveyed and questioned say they feel very safe at the school, and that there is someone to whom they could turn if they had a personal problem. One pupil contrasted Bettridge with her previous mainstream school. She said, 'I didn't feel at all safe at my last school. But coming here is the best thing that ever happened to me.'
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average. It would be higher but for the presence of pupils with serious, often life-limiting, medical conditions that require frequent hospitalisation.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership combining approachability with a steely determination to attain the very best in learning and well-being for the pupils. She leads from the front, setting a clear example, and has brought all staff, parents and carers along with her. Pupils say, 'She keeps this school up and running.'
- Leadership is distributed very well throughout the school, with staff and pupils feeling that they have a voice that is listened to and that their ideas are valued and often taken up. Teaching assistants enthusiastically take up any responsibilities they are offered and rise to the challenge, such as the very good work done by the assistant who leads on behaviour support and enables teachers to quickly and accurately record and track behavioural incidents online.
- Immediately following her appointment, the headteacher drew up a clear roadmap for improvement, including new systems for identifying and remedying underperformance in either pupils or staff. The senior leaders and governors skilfully brought most staff on board but have not shied away from difficult discussions with those who needed to make the necessary improvements. There is now a very close relationship between teachers' performance and pay awards.
- This roadmap has yielded huge benefits. Teaching and learning have continued to improve even from the previously high level. There is currently very little teaching that requires improvement and a significant proportion is exceptionally good.
- The school has completely overhauled its procedures for checking how good the school is, especially through tracking pupils' progress in communicating, reading, writing and mathematics, and in finding ways to measure very small steps in learning, particularly for those pupils who have the most severe learning difficulties.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and tailored precisely to pupils' social, physical and learning needs. The school has established many opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum, including practical learning experiences out in the community.
- The senior leaders are extremely effective in managing the school. There is an aura of quiet efficiency and calm that permeates the building, from the checking of visitors as they enter the school to the user-friendly paperwork prepared for governors and staff. Parents, carers and pupils say that events always happen on time.
- The school is highly effective in promoting equality and reducing discrimination wherever it is found so that no group of pupils does less well than any other.
- Training for staff is given the highest priority in order to further improve the quality of education, and staff surveys attest to the appropriateness and wide range of training programmes available to them.
- Partnerships with parents, carers and with external agencies such as health and social care are very strong. Parents and carers say that the school works very closely with them.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge to the school, principally through the allocation of a school improvement officer who provides the school with an accurate external

view of the quality of education.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports the school exceptionally well and makes an excellent contribution to the leadership of the school by ensuring that leaders take responsibility for its actions and the outcomes the pupils obtain. Governors are up to date on what the data show about pupils' progress and how it compares with the progress of similar pupils in other schools nationally. Governors make very prudent decisions about the school's finances very effectively ensuring that there are rigorous procedures for safeguarding the pupils. Governors bring a very wide range of skills and experience to their work, and all have attended recent training including how to judge the quality of teaching. They know the strengths of teaching and where improvement is required. The governors have made sure there are effective arrangements to assess and manage the performance of staff and ensure that salaries reflect that quality of performance. Parent governors play a full part in meetings bringing first-hand experience of the quality of education from the families' point of view. Governors have a very good knowledge of how the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium money is being spent, and have assessed that this money is used very well and has a positive effect on eligible pupils.
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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	115821
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	408913

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheilagh Banner
Headteacher	Mandy Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 December 2008
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