

Battledown Centre for Children and Families

Harp Hill, Cheltenham, GL52 6PZ

Inspection dates 4–5 June 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.

- It provides an exceptional start for young disabled children and those with special educational needs. All children, including those with complex medical needs and facing highly significant barriers to communication, make exceptional progress.
- There are excellent relationships at every level, between all members of the school community. These result in children overcoming significant barriers to learning and parents who feel exceptionally well supported in the education and care of their children. Staff know children and their families very well and this enables them to make sure that the smallest steps of progress are built upon, celebrated and shared with parents so that learning can continue at home.
- Teachers and early years educators make the most of every moment of the school day for learning. The whole staff team works extremely well together and with all other professionals to see that all interactions with children in the classrooms, outside and at lunchtime promote learning remarkably sensitively so that children are constantly making excellent progress.
- Children behave exceptionally well because they are so involved in what they are doing. Staff adjust the stimulus and situations so that excellent behaviour is maintained. Children become as independent as possible playing on large equipment safely.
- All members of staff are involved in checking how well the school is doing and making sure that the school is continually developing through the 'change teams'.
- Senior leaders and the governing body make sure that the school is constantly improving with well-focused plans for further development.
- There is an exceptional relationship with parents, and families often begin their contact with Battledown when their child is very young.
- Parents comment that the support provided for them, both emotionally and in helping their child to learn, is exceptional. 'You don't feel alone any more, it's like a family.' 'They gave us the keys to unlock our child.' These were typical parent comments.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 sessions or part sessions of teaching-and-learning activities in the school. These were taught by five class teaching teams of teachers and early years practitioners. Four joint observations were carried out with the headteacher and two with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, a group of parents, a group of governors including the Chair and Vice Chair. There were informal discussions with children and a telephone call to the local authority adviser. All staff completed a questionnaire.
- The inspector took into account the 15 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed in a recent parents' questionnaire carried out by the school.
- The inspector looked at the school's documents, including records of assessment and children's progress, planning for improvement, monitoring of teaching and learning and records about attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janet Dinsmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school and all children are supported at Early Years Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs. All children are disabled or have significant special educational needs including severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions with significant barriers to communication, and profound and multiple learning difficulties including hearing and visual impairment.
- The school incorporates a child development centre for children from birth to two years of age, which children usually attend with their parents. Children can start at the school from age two and can continue up to age seven. The majority leave before, during or after their Reception year and transfer to special and mainstream schools or other early years settings. The school provides integrated education and therapy for the children and support for parents and families. Children attend an increasing number of morning or afternoon sessions, becoming full time in the Reception year. Extended services are provided in school holidays, both for children at the school and their siblings.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals and in receipt of the pupil premium (additional funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is average.
- The proportion of children who are from minority ethnic groups and whose home language is not English is below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that there are increased opportunities to compare assessments of children's progress with other special schools and mainstream early years settings.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children make outstanding progress. They all have significant delays in their learning and development and make excellent progress in their physical development and personal and social development. All children make excellent progress in the development of communication skills, whether this is learning to give eye contact and make a simple physical response or beginning to use signs and words.
- Children develop physical skills well. Older children use bikes competently, climb and use the slide and independently use steps to get into the swings. Younger children develop walking skills well, gaining stamina and resilience, particularly when they want to get to the activities at the other side of the playground or at the Forest School. Children use sensory stimuli well, particularly sound and movement, to express preferences in the sensory and well-equipped therapy rooms and to explore new sensations, for example in handling foodstuffs.
- Children continually learn to relate to adults and each other. Older children begin to cooperate and play alongside each other and younger ones have opportunities to interact with adults who model exceptionally high quality relationships at all times. Children learn to express their likes and dislikes and these are used to extend their learning, for example as an incentive following the completion of a task.
- Children learn to use signs and pictures to communicate and the very youngest understand the coloured glove that is used to indicate the time to move from the outdoors to the classroom, or the small chair to indicate that it is circle time. Children contribute well in small groups, signing and singing to indicate parts of the body or recognising sounds of vehicles. Children enjoy songs and stories and books, for example recognising pictures and signing the animals they see.
- Children communicate all the time, practising their skills because they want to participate in activities and demonstrate what they are learning. Some older ones can recognise their name and those of their peers in print and are beginning to enjoy mark making and drawing to record what they are doing and count objects.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- All staff work as a cohesive team, not only within class groups but also across the school. They are very well trained and highly experienced in assessment methods, educational tools and therapies that enable children with significant disabilities and special educational needs to learn. They all know all the children well. Parents commented about this, saying, 'Staff pick up all the nuances and tiniest indications that my child makes.'
- Adults are constantly interacting with the children and assessing, discussing and working out how to make sure that excellent progress is maintained. Class team meetings give excellent opportunities to discuss what is working or not for particular children so that the learning can be rapidly adjusted. There is an excellent balance of child-selected and adult-led activities which are regularly modified during the day. For example, children had seen pictures of vehicles and transferred this to investigating how the school bikes worked. Appropriate tools were quickly suggested by staff and children explored the use of these in their play.
- Children who always play in the same way or choose the same things to do are sensitively introduced to new experiences, for example in trying new foods and being taught to use spoons. Weekly Forest School visits give older children a different place to explore, discovering beetles, counting legs and making tracks and footprints in the mud. These sessions also enable adults to observe the children developing new skills and reactions to wildlife in mature woodland, so giving an extra dimension to assessment.
- Parents comment that the provision of occupational, speech and physio-therapies on the school site means there is minimum disruption as these take place. It also means that there is exceptional team working between teachers and therapists and constant communication about

the small steps of progress of individual children and adjustments to what they need to do to accelerate their progress further. The school also makes excellent provision for sensory integration and music therapies which work exceptionally well in meeting the needs of many of the children. Parents commented that this saves them having to go to the hospital and that they can watch therapies taking place at any time so that they can continue with them at home.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children behave exceptionally well. They show their enthusiasm for school by participating extremely well in all the activities and choosing what they will do. They are exceptionally safe.
- Children have opportunities to experience risk, climbing, using the steps and slide and steering bikes on the slope. This they do safely and with increasing independence as they are encouraged by staff. They learn how to stay safe on the roads and use pedestrian crossings because they have real traffic lights and pedestrian lights in the playground.
- Parents comment about how much their children have changed since starting at the school, especially when they have had experience in other settings. These improvements in behaviour are rapid and result in children being calmer and kinder, not just at school but at home too.
- Staff are well trained in first aid and for supporting children with specific medical needs. Daily briefings mean that all staff know about all children and any changes in programmes. This enables them to transfer to other classrooms quickly to provide support for any medical emergency for example.
- Meal place mats and 'communication passports', where children's preferences, likes, dislikes and how best to communicate with them are outlined, ensure that all staff, students on placement and volunteers are fully informed about the children, their specific needs and forms of communication so that children can continually learn through positive interactions with all adults in the school. This prevents children from becoming distressed.
- There is no bullying or poor behaviour. Staff adjust the school environment for the needs of the children, particularly those facing significant barriers to communication who may otherwise have challenging behaviour. In this way all children can learn in the best possible environment for their needs. Parents comment that the advice they have received from staff is very helpful in managing children's behaviour at home.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All staff, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, are all involved in planning to improve the school and checking how effective the changes are. This means that different aspects of the school can be improved at the same time. Administrative staff are fully involved in this as well. Recent examples are the improvements to the playground, the way parents collect children and reviewing the assessment of children's progress. Different views are considered and decisions made taking account of these.
- Staff performance is managed very well so that training needs are clearly identified and practice continually improved. There are opportunities for staff to observe colleagues in other schools and also to learn from each other. The school does not, however, compare assessments of children's progress with other special and mainstream provision. Working with other professionals on a daily basis means that all educational staff can integrate speech and occupational therapy skills into all classroom practice.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this outstanding school. The school's contribution is highly valued, sharing expertise in supporting other early years settings and providing training for staff. The school has a partnership with an initial teacher training provider and local colleges, providing training places for students, which not only means that outstanding practice is shared but also enables students to contribute to individual children's progress.
- The pupil premium is used very effectively for children to have access to swimming and horse riding, promoting their physical and social development so that they achieve the best they

possibly can.

- Parents speak very highly of the work of the school. They can clearly identify the exceptional progress that their children have made since joining, beyond what they would have imagined possible. They also report that it is a very inclusive place where everyone is treated equally and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have made sure that they have a good set of skills and are well trained to enable them to provide support and challenge to the school. They question and challenge the leadership well and visit to check how well the school is doing. This means they have a good understanding of the achievement of children and the quality of teaching. They make sure that teachers' performance and that of the headteacher is managed well and teachers' pay is related to their performance in the classroom. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. They know that the pupil premium is used very well to promote the physical and social development of eligible children so that they develop skills in line with their peers.

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	115828
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	403276

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	2–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Martin
Headteacher	Jane Cummins
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2008
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