

Bardwell School

Hendon Place, Sunderland Drive, Bicester, OX26 4RZ

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2014

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.

- Teaching has improved over time and is typically good. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard and learn well.
- Effective teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that very young children quickly develop good learning habits.
- Because teaching is better in all classes, pupils' achievements have improved and they make good progress from their low starting points. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the other activities provided for them.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and are well prepared for the next stages of their lives and learning. Teaching in the sixth form is sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils settle quickly in lessons and behave very well. They are good ambassadors for the school when out in the wider community.
- School leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching. As a result, they know their school's strengths and what they must do to improve those areas which are weaker.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They have ensured that all available resources are used effectively to raise standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, the contribution of teaching assistants is not so well organised as to ensure that pupils are always doing their very best.
- Recent improvements in curriculum planning have not yet led to pupils making equally strong progress in all subject areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed twelve lessons taught by 11 different teachers. This amounted to over five hours spent in classrooms. School leaders joined inspectors in three of these lessons.
- During learning walks around the school, inspectors looked at displays of pupils' work and photographs of the different activities they take part in. One inspector watched a video which students in the sixth form have made about their time at school.
- Seventeen parents took the opportunity to express their views by completing the online Parent Survey. Four parents spoke to an inspector at the school. Thirty-five members of staff completed their questionnaire.
- Inspectors gained the views of pupils in a meeting and during lunch and break times. They looked at pupils' work books and the records of their achievements. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed lessons in which language and communication skills were practised.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority and a meeting held with members of the governing body to discuss their work and contribution.
- Inspectors carefully scrutinised the school's own documents, including how it plans for improvement, important policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe, and minutes of governors' and other meetings.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Most pupils who attend this school live in the local area. Some have longer journeys to school and a few travel to school from neighbouring local authorities. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The headteacher has been in the school for just over a year. There have been other changes to school leadership during that time.
- There are twice as many boys as girls at the school. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to receive the pupil premium, which provides support for those in the care of the local authority, those with families in the services or those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is slightly above the national average.
- A growing number of pupils have an autistic spectrum condition. Only a very few come from homes where English is not the first language. Attendance is above average for special schools.
- Some younger pupils spend one afternoon each week at the neighbouring primary school. After-school clubs and activities are available for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of teaching so that more teaching is outstanding and none requires improvement by:
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are organised as well as possible in every lesson so that pupils always have the very best opportunities to make strong progress
 - improving teachers' knowledge in all subjects so that pupils learn as well as possible in all curriculum areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their earliest days at the school, pupils learn well and make good gains from their low starting points. Their achievements match those of pupils with similar needs in other schools, and some make even better progress than national expectations.
- There are no differences in the rates of progress made by pupils. Those who are entitled to receive the pupil premium do as well as, or even better than, others. Almost all parents believe that their children make good progress. One parent told an inspector 'I can't believe how much progress my son has made since coming to this school.'
- Pupils make important gains with literacy skills. Where teaching is well-planned, they try hard to read words and sentences by building up the sounds and learning about punctuation. Some pupils have learned to assess what they have achieved in lessons; they use different coloured markers to record how much they know and how much help they needed.
- In a very effective lesson in the sixth form, students were learning to think about how they would like to spend their money, and about what they need to spend their money on. They were helped to make plans and carry out simple calculations by staff from a local bank who were visiting their class.
- Younger pupils demonstrated their good communication skills when they talked about the features of an animal's face, using describing words to say precisely what they meant. They learned to write sentences which contained these words and were proud of the detail which they were able to add to their stories.
- Almost all pupils know what they must do to make even more progress. Goals for improvement are agreed at termly planning meetings and reviewed regularly, with any necessary changes made when the target has been achieved. Therapists make a good contribution and help to make the goals as relevant as possible for each individual.
- Older students successfully gain accreditation for work they have completed through award-bearing schemes, including BTEC and the OCR Life and Living programme. The interesting work experience programmes which many follow help to prepare them well for the move to further education college or to the world of work.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved over time. Most is good and some teaching is outstanding. A small amount requires improvement. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of every pupil in their classes to plan lessons which capture the attention of all.
- In almost all lessons, teaching assistants make a strong contribution by helping pupils to do as well as possible. In a particularly strong early morning lesson, a teaching assistant made sure that one pupil could contribute fully. She provided exactly the amount of support the pupil needed to find the right place on her communication device so that she could have her say in the discussion.
- However, in a few lessons, teaching assistants are not so clear about what they have to do, and time is not always used as well as it might be to keep pupils learning. Pupils' learning slows because pupils are not encouraged to participate in lessons soon enough.
- Teachers provide good feedback to pupils about their successes and what they must do to achieve more. In class, they praise pupils' successes, using signing where this is appropriate, and they mark pupils' workbooks regularly, commenting on how well they are doing and giving advice about what needs to be learned in the future. As a result, pupils are clear about their next steps.
- Teachers provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils can learn well through play

and experimentation. In a very effective lesson for the youngest pupils, they learned about Shrove Tuesday and Lent, then eagerly took their turn at tossing pancakes.

- The teacher in the good sixth form uses every opportunity to broaden students' understanding of the wider world. For example, whilst few students are likely to learn to drive, there are excellent opportunities for them to learn about safety in the car and common dangers on the road, whilst at the same time practising good visual perception, speaking and listening skills. Teaching assistants in the sixth form provide effective support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In class and when out in the wider community, pupils behave very well. In all classes they settle quickly and work hard. They enjoy their time at school and their attendance is good. Pupils show appropriate levels of concern and curiosity about those who are absent because of illness.
- Because they have learned such good personal and social skills, pupils are able to compare their own behaviour with that of others. A good example of this was noted in a discussion which pupils were holding with their teacher on their return from a shopping trip. One pupil described what he considered to be the dangerous behaviour of a member of the public who dashed over a crossing, putting himself and others at risk.
- At lunchtime and in the playground, pupils are polite and friendly to each other and to visitors. They are keen to discuss what they have been doing in class and are good at sharing. There are plenty of staff around to ensure that everyone is safe and to help to organise games.
- A very few parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour at the school, but these concerns were not borne out by any evidence noted during the inspection. Other parents told an inspector how well looked after their children are, and one commented that the home-school books keep parents well informed of what is happening.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school and they know who to ask for help when they need it. They enjoy meeting their friends and one pupil said that he likes the 'quiet atmosphere' at the school.
- Bullying of any kind is rarely heard of. School leaders record incidents rigorously and make sure that everyone is informed of what has happened, providing support for both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Pupils are taught well about looking after themselves and staying safe. They learn to stay safe on-line and students in the sixth form are taught about the advantages and occasional disadvantages of texting using mobile telephones.

The leadership and management are good

- Since joining the school, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to drive up the standard of teaching and to raise pupils' achievements. He has received effective support from members of the school's leadership team. They compare their pupils' achievements with teachers in similar schools. They are determined to make this an outstanding school.
- Good systems have been introduced for monitoring teaching. Useful feedback is given and strengths and weaknesses are discussed and analysed at teachers' meetings and by governors. This has led to a sharper focus on planning, and on setting precise targets for improvement for teachers and for pupils.
- Middle leaders make a good contribution by making sure that planning in what the school calls the 'core subjects' closely matches the needs of all its pupils. However, they have not yet had time to improve planning in other important subjects, which means that pupils do not make such good progress as they might. They ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

understanding is well developed. Good teaching and planning, and emerging links with others, mean that pupils learn well about the similarities and differences between people of varying faiths and lifestyles.

- School leaders have used primary sports funding to good effect, to encourage more pupils to learn to swim, and to participate in after-school clubs.
- Performance management systems relate what needs to be done to improve teaching and achievement to the requirements of the teaching standards. School leaders, including governors, know about the links between strong performance and pay, and there are realistic expectations of what might be expected from teachers at different stages in their careers. Those on upper pay scales effectively carry out the responsibilities that go with that level of reward.
- All resources are used well by every member of the school community. Good planning ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The local authority has provided light touch support to this school and understands how much it has improved since the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors use the good information they have about the school's strengths and weaknesses to challenge school leaders to reach ambitious targets. They are clear about how the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up money and primary sports money have helped to raise achievement and broaden pupils' experiences. For example, governors know that the purchase of new technologies equipment has helped pupils in Year 7 to make better progress in literacy and numeracy. They have a good understanding of how the school compares with similar schools nationally. They work hard to ensure that the school is as safe as it can be and that all requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met.

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	123444
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	431041

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Waine
Headteacher	John Riches
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2012
Telephone number	01869 242182
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