

Battledown Centre for Children and Families

Harp Hill, Battledown, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 6PZ

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leadership team, although new, has worked assiduously to ensure that pupils have a good, rounded, quality of education.
- Pupils make at least good progress. Pupils are taught well. Staff and therapists help pupils to be emotionally, and physically, ready to learn.
- Communication between the school and families is a significant strength in supporting pupils' personal development and well-being.
- The governors provide good support and challenge to school leaders and staff. They ensure that funds are maximised to benefit pupils' outcomes, and that features of the school such as the curriculum are improving.
- Children in the early years make good progress in all areas of their learning and development.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.
- The most able pupils, particularly those in Year 2, do not have enough work that is sufficiently challenging. This hampers their progress.
- The assessment of pupils' work is accurate. It is also over complex. The smaller steps that pupils are making are not used strategically enough by senior leaders to ensure outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders are aware that the school development plan, assessment systems and their new roles and responsibilities need to be embedded in order to be more effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further to enable pupils to achieve their potential by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils, particularly those in Year 2, have activities that are suitably challenging.
- Continue to develop the quality of leadership at the school by ensuring that:
 - the new systems and leadership roles are fully embedded
 - the smaller steps that pupils are making in their learning are reviewed more strategically to measure the effectiveness of the school, using this knowledge to make future improvements
 - the school development plan is an effective tool that is used to drive school improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new senior leadership team has attacked the school's areas for improvement with high levels of energy and determination. The new initiatives, based on specialist therapists' advice, are being implemented in all classes. They are already bringing about improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Staff, using a secure phone application, send and receive text messages and photos with pupils' families. Parents, along with extended family members, greatly appreciate this. They told inspectors how it makes them feel a real part of the learning team, helping them to share the smallest steps in their children's development and learning.
- The staff ensure that the curriculum provided for those children in the early years, and pupils in Years 1 and 2, is age appropriate. Pupils are provided with additional opportunities to take part in musical, artistic, sporting and scientific activities, which they enjoy. Their social skills improve and pupils begin to overcome the barriers to their learning in a secure environment.
- Lessons are calm because teachers have high expectations for high-quality work and behaviour. Pupils understand the consistent routines and benefit from the kind, caring staff support they receive.
- Before they join the school, and following their arrival, staff assess pupils' individual needs. The school and the Child Development Centre (CDC) work 'hand-in-glove' with therapists to set ambitious targets. They ensure that pupils get in-class support and one-to-one interventions that support pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is interwoven through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils begin to learn right from wrong, turn taking, sharing toys and activities, and listening to others.
- Parents and students from a local college regularly visit the school, sharing their different cultures with pupils through cooking, music, stories and dress. Pupils develop respect for others.
- The school receives light touch external support from the local authority. The governing body has appointed an external consultant to carry out staff performance tasks and to help support the new leadership in its roles. The roles and responsibilities are currently being embedded, but are already leading to improvements for pupils.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the school gets the most out of special educational needs funding, along with the physical education and sports premium. They ensure that those pupils who are entitled to extra funding through the pupil premium do as well as other pupils.
- The school's assessment and recording systems are detailed and externally moderated. They help other providers have a good understanding of pupils' achievements when they leave Battledown to join their provision.
- Class teachers evaluate their own performance and know the next small steps that each pupil needs to make in order to meet their development and learning targets. The strategic overview of these small steps is less well documented. This hinders the

sharpness of senior leaders' strategic development planning.

- The school development plan has been constructed with the input from staff. It is a work in progress. School leaders, and governors, are well aware that it needs to be much sharper to be an efficient tool to help drive, consolidate, measure and hold leaders accountable for school improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors ask relevant and challenging questions to check that the new senior leadership's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and outcomes. They now know where the best learning is, and where further improvements can be made.
- The new governing body members effectively supplement the skills and knowledge of those who are more established. They bring new ideas and experiences.
- The new roles and responsibilities in the governing body are also enabling the school to improve. Through increased challenge, and awareness of all aspects of the school's provision, the governing body is holding all members of the school's workforce more firmly to account for their work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff, governors and therapists are vigilant and know what to do if they identify concerns.
- Through their training, staff are able to identify and act on signs of harm or risk. This includes training on the school's 'Prevent' duty, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.
- The senior leaders, along with governors and other staff, work very effectively with parents, carers, other providers and agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and their welfare is supported. The family support provided by the school, and through the CDC, helps children's families get the support they need to keep their children safe and secure.
- Recruitment of staff follows government guidelines. The governor responsible for safeguarding ensures that the school's systems are being implemented effectively. This includes checking that the information recorded on the school's single central record is accurate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff get to know the needs and desires of pupils very well. Liaison between home and school is a significant strength of the school, helping staff to have a good understanding of pupils' desires and interests. The electronic information sharing, in particular, helps staff to see what pupils can, or cannot, do in their home environment. They then use this information to either build on successes seen at home or target areas that need reinforcement as part of the school day.
- 'Bucket time', although new, is proving to be highly successful in increasing pupils'

attention spans. Good levels of concentration by staff and pupils are required for the pupils to maintain their attention on the bucket objects as the lead member of staff takes out each object and explores it. The way that staff communicate that 'bucket time' is in operation, when out of sync with the daily plan, is not effective. Sometimes the noise, or activities, of other classes distract pupils at this precious time, limiting the impact of 'bucket time' to increase their concentration skills.

- As a result of staff using pupils' interests to help shape their planning, pupils are quickly 'hooked' into their learning tasks. 'Bucket time' is a prime example of this. When removing an object from the 'bucket', staff make sure that the objects are ones that the pupils are curious about, or have as a favourite.
- Staff use the pupils' jointly generated My Plan, or education, health and care plans, to inform their teaching. However, some plans are more useful than others. Regardless, teachers make sure that pupils have clear learning targets and that pupils have work that focuses on what the pupil needs to do next. The accuracy of school assessments of pupils' work is ensured through external moderation with other local schools.
- The assessment systems used by the school are overcomplicated. The small steps in pupils' learning are monitored by the class teachers to inform their future planning. However, until recently, they have not been reviewed well enough across the school or measured strategically. As a result, sometimes the most able pupils, particularly those in Year 2, have work that does not challenge them enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The integration of therapy work during the school day is highly effective in supporting pupils with the most complex needs to be emotionally and physically ready to learn.
- Pupils grow in confidence and begin to enjoy their learning because of the high-quality support provided by the therapy team and school staff. They are happy in school.
- Parents reported that they felt their children were safe in school. Staff agree with their view. These views are supported by inspection evidence.
- The bins containing disposable toilet products are not refreshed often enough. Sometimes this reduces the quality of the learning environment, particularly for those pupils who struggle with sensory stimulation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils often join the school with low levels of self-esteem and poor relationships with other children. Staff and parents work closely together so that pupils learn to play nicely and share with others.
- Good role modelling, consistent expectations and clear boundaries are set by staff. As a result, pupils learn to manage their own behaviour. There are very few occasions when staff have needed to physically intervene when pupils' behaviour slips.

- Excellent training and links with therapy teams help teaching staff to continue to reduce pupils' anxieties and modify inappropriate behaviours when the therapists are not present.
- Last year, the school had an unusually high number of pupils in Year 2. Some of these pupils struggled to demonstrate good behaviour for learning. The amendments to the provision for older pupils have ensured that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are now good.
- Attendance is good, when taking into account pupils' medical conditions. Any absence is promptly followed up and appropriate actions taken.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. Increasingly, pupils are able to work together, which reduces their social isolation and prepares them better for life outside of school.
- Pupils make good progress in all classes. Pupils start school working very significantly below the age-related bands.
- The youngest pupils and those with the most profound and complex needs make the best progress. Although the progress they make is in very small stages, over longer periods of time than their peers, they increasingly have a better understanding of the world around them and more interaction with their families.
- Frequently, pupils leave Battledown to start, or return to, mainstream education settings. This is a result of good-quality intervention work, support provided by the school staff, and therapists' interventions.
- Pupils increasingly develop skills to help them be less dependent on adults. Through strong development of language acquisition, and improved communication with signs and symbols, pupils are enabled to make real choices and make their views known.
- The most able pupils, particularly those in Year 2, sometimes do not have work that is sufficiently challenging. This hampers them reaching their potential. School leaders are aware of this and new systems are already in place that are helping raise all pupils' achievements.

Early years provision

Good

- There is no single member of the leadership team responsible for the early years. The judgements and statements made in the overall leadership and management section of this report also apply here.
- Partnerships between the school, CDC, parents, therapists, other providers and external services are a significant strength of the school's provision. The comprehensive support enables families to get the support they need, when they need it. However, some parents do not have a good enough understanding as to how they can access personalised budgets for their children.
- Pupils in key stage 1, and children in the early years, are taught together. The

curriculum provided covers all of the requirements for children in the early years.

- Staff have an excellent understanding of the next steps of development for the children. They use their knowledge to plan for the next, often very small, steps they need to make.
- There is a good range of external environments for children to explore. These include a 'forest school' with 'mud kitchen', and external music-making area. Internal rooms include a dedicated hygienic food kitchen and soft play area. These areas are highly effective in stimulating children's curiosity, extending their knowledge of the world around them.

School details

Unique reference number	115828
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10012649

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ros Sutton
Acting Headteacher	Mary King-Stokes
Telephone number	01242 525472
Website	www.battledown.org.uk
Email address	head@battledown.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In this special school, all children and pupils are supported by My Plan or My Plan Plus, or have an education, health and care plan. Their needs include profound and multiple learning difficulties, or severe learning difficulties. Increasingly, they have additional complex conditions that provide significant barriers to communication. A significant proportion who join the school are non-verbal, or have very limited communication skills. Around half have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.
- There are four classes. Each class is organised by ability and special need. The age ranges in each class are from two to seven years. In some classes there is a greater proportion of older pupils than others.
- Very few pupils are eligible for support through the pupil premium. This is additional

government funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.

- The school provides specialist assessment of children from birth to age seven, covering the whole range of additional needs.
- The school provides support for teachers, teaching assistants and early years practitioners in other educational settings.
- Situated within the Battledown Centre for Children and Families is the Child Development Centre (CDC). This is an early years setting for children with additional needs to attend with their parents or carers from birth to the age of about three years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors worked comprehensively with senior leaders throughout both days. They met with other leaders, parents, transport drivers and members of the governing body.
- With senior leaders, the inspectors scrutinised the quality of pupils' work and observed children and pupils, in all classes, learning in lessons.
- The 12 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. There were no responses by staff or pupils to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire. However, the responses by 16 staff to the school's questionnaire were taken into account.
- The inspectors considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation, and development plans.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jen Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

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