

Inspection of a good school: Bettridge School

Warden Hill Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 3AT

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

Bettridge School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bettridge School is a school where pupils are well cared for. Staff are highly skilled at understanding each pupil's individual needs. Pupils use a range of communication aids and strategies that enable them to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings. Strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel happy and become confident learners.

Leaders have designed new curriculum pathways that allow pupils to achieve well from their different starting points. Pupils like learning alongside their peers, who have similar learning needs to themselves. Learning is carefully planned to help each pupil make small steps of progress towards their education, health and care (EHC) plan objectives. Pupils enjoy learning through practical and play activities. They engage well in a range of social and cultural events.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The atmosphere in classes is calm, quiet and purposeful. Staff provide effective support to pupils. This helps pupils to maintain good levels of concentration and effort in their work. When pupils become distressed, anxious or cross, staff manage this well. As a result, pupils are kept safe. They say that they feel happy at school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher has high aspirations for pupils. Since her arrival two years ago, the curriculum has been re-designed. Pupils now follow the 'blue, yellow or green pathways'. Each pathway has been carefully considered to provide small steps of learning. However, in some subjects the sequence of learning is not complete, particularly as pupils move between different key stages. This makes it hard for teachers to ensure that learning is always building on what pupils already know and can do.

Teachers use a wide range of assessments to find out what pupils understand. Despite this, curriculum leaders have not yet evaluated which of these are most effective. As a

result, there is some inconsistency in what staff know about how well pupils learn. Leaders ensure photographs, recordings, spoken and written word records are all used as evidence of pupils progressing through the pathways. Parents and carers value these being frequently shared with them. They say that this helps transfer learning from school to home.

Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Not all staff have been trained in this. Pupils enjoy practising the sounds they know, using their new reading books. These books are carefully matched to what pupils remember. Pupils read regularly. They enjoy their 'everyone reading in class' lessons. Pupils take turns reading with the teacher, completing phonics learning, reading a book or playing a computer game to practise reading. As a result, pupils become better readers.

Staff ensure that the curriculum provides a good range of activities and experiences to meet pupils' EHC plan objectives. Pupils have opportunities to apply their learning in different ways, such as trips out for shopping or outside learning in the woodland area. Pupils can join in with lunchtime football or boys' and girls' clubs. There are a variety of therapies available to support pupils, including play, music and hydro. Staff plan interventions carefully to address pupils' next steps in learning. However, they do not identify what outcomes they expect pupils to improve on as a result of these interventions. Therefore, leaders are not clear on how well these interventions are supporting pupils.

In post-16, students learn about running a business. They keep chickens and sell the eggs. Students also run a school café, selling lunch and drinks to staff. Therefore, they develop their life skills to prepare them for their next stage in education. Some students successfully work towards achieving BTEC National Diploma qualifications.

Most parents highly value the school's work to support pupils. One parent, whose view was typical of many, was positive about the way her child is progressing at the school. She commented, 'Nothing is too much for the staff. However busy they are, they always find time for me. They communicate with me every day. I can't fault them.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive regular training to understand how to safeguard pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and complex medical conditions. As a result, they all know how to spot and alert leaders of any concerns. Staff report all concerns diligently and leaders take these seriously. Any concerns are acted on quickly so pupils get the help they need. Governors monitor any actions to keep pupils safe carefully.

Procedures for recruiting new staff are strong. Everything is checked twice to make sure that only candidates who meet all safeguarding requirements work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not yet sequenced as well as it could be for each pathway. As a result, teaching is not always planned well enough to ensure that learning builds on pupils' prior skills or knowledge. This makes it difficult for staff to check pupils' understanding and what they need to learn next. Leaders should ensure that there is a clear sequence of learning for all subjects, which is assessed consistently.
- Despite interventions being identified well, the impact of this intervention work is not identified accurately. This means pupils do not learn consistently well. Leaders should ensure that all interventions include ambitious end points for pupils so they achieve well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	115821
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10226927
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Becky Martin
Headteacher	Jo Bleasdale
Website	www.bettridgeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and complex medical conditions.
- The headteacher took up the post in September 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training available to them.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation took place with a consultant commissioned by the local authority to carry out a review of the school's work.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, communication and interacting, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed information from the school's website, safeguarding records, policies, behaviour reports and records of pupils' achievements across the whole curriculum.
- The views of parents were considered during a meeting with a group of parents. Also, the lead inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. He also took into consideration responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Andy Lole, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Teresa Hill

Ofsted Inspector

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