



Bensham Manor School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101851
Local Authority Croydon
Inspection number 276600
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Smith

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Ecclesbourne Road
School category	Community special		Thornton Heath
Age range of pupils	11–16		CR7 7BN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8684 0116
Number on roll (school)	159	Fax number	020 8683 1301
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Nicky Selwyn
		Headteacher	Mr Ray Knight
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	9–10 October 2006	276600

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bensham Manor is located in the north-west of the London borough of Croydon, within one of the most deprived, urban wards. Attainment levels on entry are below average and all pupils have statements of special educational needs for their moderate learning difficulties, social and emotional and behavioural difficulties, severe learning difficulties and, autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Just over half of pupils are of White heritage and others represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being from Black Caribbean or African and Asian backgrounds. A variety of home languages other than English are spoken, although very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A very small number are the children of refugees or families seeking asylum or are looked after. There are just over twice as many boys as girls. The headteacher joined the school in September 2005 and a deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher were appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides an acceptable standard of education for its pupils, and in a number of areas the school performs well. This judgement matches the school's own view of itself, although it underestimates the good quality of its care, guidance and support for pupils. The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Together with a very dynamic and knowledgeable chair of governors, the shared vision is being put into practice. There is already a positive impact on staff expectations and improved provision, which is beginning to raise pupils' progress and achievement. The school is offering satisfactory value for money.

Although the standards achieved by pupils are below the national average, given their starting points they make satisfactory progress. In some areas, some pupils make good progress, for example, in their personal development and general confidence that they will succeed. Pupil attitudes to their work are good and they enjoy coming to school and fully participating in all activities offered to them. A parent commented, 'My son has only been at the school for a short time, but with the support and help of the staff he has already made a great improvement. The school has done wonders for him'.

Through robust, systematic monitoring, the school has correctly identified the main weaknesses in teaching and learning. Support has been given and consequently the quality of teaching is predominately satisfactory. There are examples of good and excellent class teaching but these are not shared widely across all classes. Where pupils make good progress, it is a result of good or better teaching and the good care and support for their individual needs. Recent strategies to improve monitoring, assessment and the recording of pupils' progress are already raising their achievement, although currently they are not consistently applied across the school. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs and interests of most pupils. However, the school is aware that there is an insufficient range of curriculum opportunities to ensure that the needs of those pupils with more complex learning difficulties and those with ASD are met more effectively as least and most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.

As clearly reported by the pupils, the extra-curricula opportunities that are available during out of class hours are a strength. The school has a very good understanding of 'Every Child Matters' and what the pupils need to do to continually improve their personal development which is already good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the morning breakfast club offers good opportunities for pupils' social development as well as enhancing their understanding of living a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are very well cared for and supported, and ongoing guidance in terms of their next stage of learning is made very clear to them. However, the monitoring and assessing of their ongoing progress is not consistently built into teaching and curriculum planning. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good and they are very happy and confident in their learning. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and report improvements over the past year. A foster parent wrote, 'I am so happy with my son's progress as previously he was so unsettled, socially and academically,

but now he has become a confident child. I would like to thank the teachers for making him so much happier about himself'.

There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection. School monitoring has improved and consequently governors now have an accurate picture of the school and take a full and active part in the strategic management of the school. Capacity to improve is therefore good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that whole school strategies are successfully and consistently carried out by all staff at all levels.
- Ensure that assessment and pupil-tracking systems give a clear picture of pupils' progress and the data are used effectively by teachers in their planning.
- Ensure curriculum opportunities are developed to more effectively meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially those with complex learning difficulties and ASD.
- Ensure that challenging work is provided for the most and least able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards pupils reach are below those expected for pupils in mainstream schools, but reflect their low starting levels when they join the school and their additional learning difficulties and disabilities. The achievements of pupils are at least satisfactory, with a number making good progress in some lessons. There is no difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups of pupils. Some pupils with ASD, or severe learning difficulties do not achieve as well as they could and the school is already addressing this issue. The increasing opportunities for recognised qualifications and accredited courses provided by the school, gives older pupils the incentive to work hard and enthusiastically prepare for their life after school. At the end of Year 11, many pupils achieve well in a range of subjects, with some gaining grades in the GCSE examinations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good as a result of the good care, support and guidance the school provides. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by assemblies, times for reflection, their personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), and arranged special events. The many favourable comments from parents support the evidence that pupils quickly gain in confidence and enjoy coming to school. Pupils behave well, have a good awareness of how to keep healthy and stay safe. Attendance is improving and is now satisfactory, which reflects the improving attitudes of pupils to their learning and is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have a good sense of living in a community and appreciate visits from members of the community such as the police

and fire officers. They enjoy the opportunities for visits outside of school including residential stays and get involved in national fund-raising events for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils gain in their self-esteem and learn skills that will be of benefit later on, and many have clear ideas about what they want to do when they leave school. Nearly all pupils move on to suitable college placements or employment and this is due to the effective career and vocational education, as well as the good individual guidance and support given.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, overall practice is not consistently supported by systematic monitoring of pupil progress. The school is very well aware of this and through its effective monitoring of teaching and learning, good practice is clearly recognised and support is given where needed to improve provision. There is good team work between teachers and assistants and they ensure that appropriate support and encouragement is given to pupils to enable them to make progress in lessons. Relationships are good and staff ensure that pupils are confident and happy in their learning with humour being used to good effect. Teachers have high expectations of pupil behaviour and manage classes well. In the best lessons, very good use is made of questions and answers to elicit pupil understanding and activities are interesting and challenging. In these lessons pupils are eagerly attentive, demonstrate a good understanding and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with a number of good aspects. There is a good emphasis on the core subjects and PSHCE which is appropriate for the needs of the pupils. The curriculum supports well the strands within 'Every Child Matters' and there is a wide range of opportunities that extend the education of the pupils and enhance their personal development. This includes a varied programme of school visits and an increasing number of additional activities, such as dancing and judo. Vocational and career education is a strength and prepares pupils very well for their next step in further studies or employment. The curriculum does not always meet the needs of all pupils, because assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are not yet being used effectively to adapt the curriculum according to pupils' individual needs. In particular, those pupils with severe or complex learning needs, including those with autistic learning disorder do not always have sufficient challenge in their learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall this aspect of the work is good. However, care, and support are good while academic guidance is satisfactory. Pastoral care is good; there is good communication with external support agencies that help ensure that pupils' personal and emotional development needs are effectively met. Pupils feel that they are well supported and helped to become independent. They are given a range of opportunities to be responsible, including being a member of the school council. One parent remarked, 'The school is preparing our son so well for life after school from the early days of 'travel training' to his work experience this year'. There are appropriate systems and procedures to minimise risk and to ensure the pupils' well-being. Child protection procedures are clearly understood by staff and appropriate training has taken place. It is made clear to pupils in lessons how they may improve and increasingly good reference is being made to their individual targets and the progress they are making towards them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. It is improving and, the recently-formed senior leadership team are effectively implementing changes that are beginning to have an impact upon school provision and pupil achievement. The recently-appointed headteacher is very aware of the current deficiencies and together with his senior leadership team and with the active and effective support of the chair of governors, has correctly prioritised strategies for improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning and the raising of expectations in the classroom has been a recent focus and is leading to improvements. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress have been developed and all staff are aware of what they need to do to improve their planning. A system for reviewing the performance of teachers is in place and is connected to pupils' targets and their progress and achievement. Self-evaluation processes are good and are based upon recorded evidence, and the necessary improvements have been clearly identified to have most impact on raising pupils' standards and achievement. There has been a great improvement in governance since the last inspection and the chair of governors ensures they fulfil their responsibilities and take an active part in the strategic management of the school. The recognition of weaknesses and the clarity of planning and strategies for improvement, together with the recent improvements, clearly indicate that the school is going in the right direction.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome while we were visiting you this week and I would like to give a special thanks to the newly-elected school council for giving up their time to speak with me. At the moment the school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education, but it is good to see that the school knows what it has to do to improve and make things even better for you. We particularly liked the fact that;

- All staff care and support you very well.
- Many of you improve your attendance and most of your behaviour is good.
- You are happy in your lessons and you make good personal progress.
- You really enjoy the activities during the lunch break.
- You are learning skills that will be helpful when you leave school and you know how to keep safe and lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Your parents/carers are really happy with what the school does for you.
- The headteacher and all the staff do their best to make sure you are happy and safe and you are happy to talk to them if you have any problems.

The school knows it has to improve by ensuring;

- All staff work together to successfully carry out the plans that will improve your opportunities.
- Your progress is assessed and recorded so that your work in lessons is making you think hard and you know exactly what you have to do to improve.
- All of you have the range of curriculum opportunities that best match the way you work and that will ensure you make good progress.
- Your work stretches you.

You can help the school to improve by, coming to school every day, behaving the best you can, and by asking how you can get better whenever you can.

Yours sincerely

M.J. Smith

Lead Inspector