



# Pebble Brook School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110576  
**LEA** Buckinghamshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 278456  
**Inspection dates** 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Margaret Goodchild AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Churchill Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Aylesbury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		HP21 8LZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 415761
<b>Number on roll</b>	73	<b>Fax number</b>	01296 434442
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Janet Pentony
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 April 2004	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Donna Jolly

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a day and residential special school for secondary-aged pupils with moderate learning difficulties; a small number of pupils have emotional, social and behavioural learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties. Attainment on entry is well below average. Boys outnumber girls by almost three to one. Most pupils are White British but a significant minority are of Asian heritage. Pupils generally come from backgrounds that are socio-economically disadvantaged. The school currently provides weekly boarding for 17 of its 73 pupils. It also offers boarding accommodation to pupils from other local Buckinghamshire special schools that do not have their own residential accommodation. The school gained Investor in People status in 2005.

The last inspection judged that there were serious weaknesses in the curriculum, assessment and management.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Inspection findings closely match the school's own judgements about its effectiveness. The headteacher has a thorough knowledge of the school's work, has high expectations and provides strong direction. Other members of staff in key posts fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily but their roles are not yet as fully developed as they need to be. Managers have worked closely with the local authority since the last inspection and the school has been successful in remedying the weaknesses found at that time. Improvement has been good and the school is well placed to develop further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils are well cared for and make good progress in their personal development. They enjoy school and most appreciate the opportunities provided for them during the day and within the boarding provision. Their achievement is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects. Their literacy skills are developing well but they do not have as many opportunities as they should for using computers in a range of subjects. Teaching is satisfactory and some teaching is good. There is scope now to improve teaching further so that it is more consistently good or better. The school has recently improved the way that it uses information about how pupils are doing and this has begun to raise pupils' achievement.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides satisfactorily for those pupils who board for all or part of the week. Satisfactory leadership and management by the head of care, with good support from the headteacher, has led to good improvement since the last inspection. A recent Commission for Social Care Inspection against the National Minimum Standards found that nearly all the standards were fully met and the rest were partially met. The care staff know individual pupils well and provide a good level of care which contributes well to their personal development. There is close liaison between the boarding staff, teachers and teaching assistants in identifying pupils' individual targets and in devising their care plans. Boarders have access to an appropriate range of recreational activities and most are enthusiastic about what is provided.

<http://62.73.173.233/CSCI/RSS/96/DS0000023096.V268871.R01.S.pdf>

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement by improving the quality of teaching so that more teaching is at least good.
- Further develop the role of the deputy headteacher, Key Stage 3 co-ordinator and subject co-ordinators so that they support the headteacher more fully in moving the school forward.
- Increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The last inspection found that achievement was satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, with underachievement in mathematics, science and music. Weaknesses have been tackled effectively so that pupils' achievement is now satisfactory overall and good in some subjects. Recent improvements in the way that assessment information is used to check pupils' progress and in planning work to meet the needs of individual pupils have already begun to raise pupils' achievement. However, the impact of these changes is not yet fully evident.

Pupils make good progress in English and their literacy skills are promoted well in a number of subjects. Overall achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, science and ICT, and pupils are now making good progress in some lessons. Standards are well below the national average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties, but pupils reach standards that are broadly average in aspects of design and technology, for instance in making highly attractive Christmas cakes and in constructing in wood and metal. They have opportunities to use computers in some subjects to support their learning and to extend their skills but the use of ICT is not promoted as consistently as it should be.

Pupils met their targets in 2005 and they are currently making at least satisfactory progress towards more challenging targets for 2006. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. An increase in opportunities to follow accredited courses means that all Year 11 pupils should leave at the end of this year with some external qualifications in English, mathematics, science, ICT, core skills and in the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They have good attitudes to school and express appreciation for the support they receive and the opportunities provided. One pupil said, 'I like it all - it's a great school with great people and good staff'. Most pupils attend regularly and behave well. Although pupils say that there are occasional incidents of bullying, they are confident that these are dealt with effectively. Pupils get on well with one another and with the staff. They enjoy school and take part with enthusiasm in activities provided during the day and within the boarding provision. They learn how to keep themselves safe and have a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating, praising the nutritious school meals.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They readily take responsibility, helping with jobs around the school, and the school council makes a significant contribution to decision-making. A number of suggestions made by pupils have been put into action and pupils feel that the staff take their ideas seriously. The good progress pupils make in literacy and satisfactory progress in numeracy and ICT, together with good opportunities to learn about the world of work and to develop a range of personal qualities stands them in good stead for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching has improved since the last inspection, and is now satisfactory and sometimes good, but there is no clear evidence of outstanding teaching.

The school has recently begun to identify within medium-term plans what different groups of pupils are meant to learn. In individual lessons in English, mathematics and science, and within some lessons in other subjects, teachers also identify what they expect of different pupils, but work is not always matched to individual needs. As a result, higher and lower attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. Where teaching is good, pupils undertake tasks that are clearly based on the next steps in their learning and teachers ask questions that are skilfully matched to the needs of different pupils. This was the case in lessons seen in English and in science. Teaching assistants are used well in some lessons, are clear about what is required of them and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. However, sometimes teaching assistants could be used more effectively and some would benefit from further training.

Parents are kept well informed about how their children are doing and about what the topics they are studying. Pupils have the opportunity to do homework, and those following GCSE courses in mathematics and science are expected to do so, but homework does not make the overall contribution it should to pupils' progress.

The school has done a great deal of work to develop the way it assesses pupils' progress and this is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are effective procedures in place to identify individual needs and to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Individual education plans are of good quality and they are used in planning and in regularly reviewing pupils' progress. Teachers have begun to identify what pupils should do to improve but some communicate this to pupils more effectively than others.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory range of learning experiences and promotes pupils' personal development well. The curriculum is increasingly matched to the needs of pupils who have additional learning difficulties, for instance those with speech and language difficulties or with autistic spectrum disorders. It has satisfactory arrangements for meeting the needs of pupils who are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The range of qualifications open to pupils at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and developing. The introduction of GCSE in mathematics and science is a positive development. A range of enrichment opportunities contribute well to pupils' achievement. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and to find out about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The opportunity pupils have to take part in six weeks of work experience and to learn about

the world of work prepares them well for further education, training or employment. Involvement in enterprise activities further promotes their financial skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils, including those who board for all or part of the week. Pupils are confident that there is someone in whom they could confide, and the school pays careful attention to protecting its pupils. It is effective in promoting good behaviour and in creating an atmosphere in which pupils learn to care for one another. There are thorough systems in place for identifying potential risks and for checking on the backgrounds of new staff. The school has good arrangements for safeguarding pupils' health and safety, and for promoting their personal well-being. It works well with the speech therapist and with outside agencies to the benefit of the pupils.

Pupils receive clear guidance, both personally and academically. Recent improvements in assessment mean that pupils are now actively involved in evaluating their own progress. They regularly make judgements about how much effort they have made, how well they have achieved within individual lessons and whether they have made progress towards their individual targets. Liaison between care staff and education staff is effective, so that appropriate links are made between care plan targets and pupils' individual education plans.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, staff have worked closely with the local authority and with another local special school and have resolved the weaknesses identified at that time, and brought about good improvement in leadership and management.

The headteacher provides effective direction to the school's work, combining appropriately high expectations with a thorough awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Other members of staff with key responsibilities are becoming increasingly involved in checking the school's work. Their roles are not yet fully developed, however, and the school has a current vacancy for a Key Stage 4 co-ordinator. It is, otherwise, satisfactorily staffed, and has adequate learning resources and accommodation to meet pupils' needs.

There has been good improvement in governance since the last inspection and governors now provide the school with satisfactory support and challenge. Several new members have joined the governing body, some very recently. New governors are undergoing training and effective systems have been put in place to involve governors in gathering information about the school's work.

The school's judgements about its own effectiveness are accurate and it takes good account of the views of parents, pupils and other stakeholders. As a result, the school

is identifying the correct priorities to bring about improvement and to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential. Effective procedures are being put in place systematically to improve the quality of education and these are beginning to raise pupils' achievement. The school is well placed to improve further.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Pupils

I enjoyed my visit to your school and thank you for making me feel welcome. I am writing to tell you what I thought about the school.

Pebble Brook is a satisfactory school that does some things well. It helps you to make good progress in your personal development, and it was good to hear how much you enjoy going to school. I could also see how well you get on together, and how well the staff care for you. The teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. You are making satisfactory progress overall and you do well in some lessons, especially in English, food technology and in design and technology. I was pleased to see how much you are involved in checking your own progress at the end of lessons.

The headteacher works very hard, leads the school well and wants to make it as good as possible for you. I have told the staff that they could make the school better by making sure more of the teaching is at least good and by giving you the chance to use computers in more of your subjects. The school also needs to develop the work that some of the managers do so that the school can improve as fast as possible. I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Pebble Brook.

Yours faithfully

M J Goodchild

Lead inspector