



Bettridge School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115821
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279683
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 5 October 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Warden Hill Road
School category	Community special		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Gloucestershire GL51 3AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 514934
Number on roll	94	Fax number	01242 584107
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Terry Mullins
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Mary Saunders

Age group 2 to 19	Inspection dates 5 October 2005 - 5 October 2005	Inspection number 279683
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties is larger than most equivalent schools. It provides regional specialist provision for the North Cotswold area of Gloucestershire, including all of Cheltenham. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Almost all are from White British backgrounds. The school gained Beacon Status after the last inspection (January 2000) and staff, through outreach and in-service sessions, help support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties in many mainstream schools and other special schools in the region. Plans to expand the school to take 150 pupils were approved by the School's Adjudicator (March 2005). In May 2005, the county council overturned this judgement. The current situation is uncertain.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bettridge School is an outstanding school, which provides excellent value for money. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. She is fully supported in setting a clear direction for the work of the school by an equivalently good team of senior managers. Collectively, they inspire staff to work to the best of their capabilities and this results in pupils gaining a very high quality of education. Teaching is outstanding. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and achieve extremely well. The curriculum has been expertly developed to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school. School leaders and governors rightly recognise that the good progress made since the last inspection has helped maintain the very high standards seen then in all the work of the school. The capacity to continue to improve is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- press ahead with improving the accommodation
- operate more refined procedures for checking the work of the school against external criteria.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Most children start school in reception with few speech and language skills and many require considerable adult help when eating, toileting and dressing. They gain a very good start to their education because they are taught very well and prepared very well for their work in Year 1.

Around three quarters of pupils in Years 1 to 11 fully meet their annual targets. When assessed against the P Scales, those who make most progress move from P Level 4 to National Curriculum Level 2 over Year 6 to Year 11, the range of years to date for which data are kept. Twenty per cent of pupils do exceptionally well by gaining more than one P level a year. All pupils, irrespective of gender, cause or severity of their learning difficulties, do equivalently well against the targets set for them. As a consequence, by the time they leave school, many communicate well in different settings and function independently as young people. Given the severity of their learning difficulties this represents outstanding progress. The school, parents and officers of the local education authority linked to the school agree that this is so.

Almost all the Post-16 students join the school in Year 12 from other special schools in the region. The severity of their learning difficulties precludes them from following courses that lead to any form of accreditation. Nevertheless, records show that they make considerable progress towards their targets for learning and benefit greatly from the time they spend at Bettridge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The outstanding relationships between pupils and all adults make pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils trust the staff, know they are friendly and helpful at all times and quickly go to them when they are troubled. As a result, pupils attend regularly, behave very well, enjoy working hard at their learning and make exceptional progress in becoming increasingly mature and independent.

The gentle guidance of staff helps pupils realise what is right and wrong and what is acceptable behaviour. They have many opportunities to learn about religions, various beliefs and concepts, such as respect and friendship, as well as the effects of their actions on others. This helps make them socially aware, and they show this by supporting those they see as in greater need. Recently, they took part in the 'Wear Red' and 'Send a Cow to Africa' days, and during the inspection, sold their artwork to gain money to help children in Africa.

A project, that includes staff and pupil exchanges, is continuing a link with other European schools. This provides excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultures that make up the European community.

Pupils welcome opportunities to have their voice heard within the community. Last year some Year 11 pupils presented their views on the leisure activities they wished to have available to them as disabled young adults to the councillors and other community leaders at the Town Hall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The outstanding relationships make pupils confident learners, unafraid of making a mistake and eager to try out new ways of learning and new equipment. Consequently, learning is fun and rewarding and pupils and staff gain great enjoyment from celebrating success. Teachers use information from tracking progress very well in planning lessons that are relevant to each pupil. Tasks are selected to meet their particular learning needs. Consequently, all pupils achieve as well as they can because new skills build on prior learning. In each class, the range of pupils' learning needs and their capabilities is very wide. Routinely, all staff meet this challenge because they are expert and experienced in using many different approaches and strategies. For example, in one lesson, the specialist approach for teaching autistic children was used exceptionally well in enabling a Year 6 pupil to write sentences about a story that had been read to the whole class. Also, the skills of the staff in using communication strategies such as signs, symbols and pictures help all pupils, irrespective of their limitations with speech and language, make equivalent progress against their targets for learning.

Staff do very well in minimising the difficulties the smallest classrooms impose on what they can teach and how teaching can occur.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is broad, well balanced and matches very well with pupils' learning and additional needs. For those in Years 1 to 11, it meets statutory requirements and is exceptionally well planned. It is made relevant to each pupil through their own targets for learning. It is coherent because additional experiences, such as taking part in the intensive interactive sessions and using the sensory room, provide specific help for learning and for personal and social development. Regular experiences of the adult world provide valuable opportunities for helping the older pupils become more independent and self-confident. The curriculum is extended in many ways. Pupils enjoy taking part in the lunchtime clubs and the after school study support club. They swim, play football, cook and dance and use the climbing wall in the local leisure centre. Many return to school during the summer holidays to take part in the activities of the Summer School. There are strong links with their local secondary school, which has specialist art college status. Numerous theatre groups and musicians regularly visit the school and the school sports co-ordinators programme provides experience of games, such as tag rugby, hockey and tennis.

The Foundation Stage curriculum includes all the early learning areas and prepares children well for their work in Year 1. The Post-16 curriculum is formed around the individual needs of students. It is working very well in ensuring an increasing quality of life and the continuing development of independence.

This is a very inclusive school, which adds an important dimension to promoting the personal and social development of pupils. The inclusion programme is detailed, agreed with parents and ranges from visits to mainstream schools, for example to take part in assemblies or to watch school plays, to visits by individual pupils to take part in lessons. The programme is additionally supported by regular visits to the centre of Cheltenham and to many of the local facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are very well looked after and cared for. Child protection requirements and safety procedures are firmly established and understood by all staff. Statutory requirements are met.

Targets for learning and for personal development are precise and kept on computer so that analyses can be easily carried out. Success against targets is quickly recognised, the next target promptly set and the progress for different classes and groups of pupils checked for equivalence.

Pupils' additional needs are catered for very well. The work of the school nurse, a range of therapists and the specialist teachers for pupils with vision and hearing impairments make important contributions to improving pupils' learning.

Parents and carers feel particularly well informed about their children's progress. They value the home-school diaries because they provide detailed information on their children's day, and also because they include information for continuing the work of the school in the home.

The school is justifiably proud of its links with the local community, including the well established relationships with many local agencies and groups. For example, in the week prior to the inspection, the Rotary Club donated a substantial amount of money to the school fund.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding. She is committed and accomplished and visible throughout the school. She is an excellent role model who is fully supported by an equally competent team of senior managers. Day-to-day they provide conditions in which staff and pupils consistently do their best because systems and procedures are clear and understood by all and expectations are very high.

Embedded deeply within the school's ethos is the need for continuous self-evaluation as an integral element for sustained improvement. This is a strength of the school. It is reflected in the rigorous procedures for evaluating the work, and also in the way information is used for further development. All staff discharge their duties very effectively. They fully accept the need for regularly updating their skills and knowledge through in-service training.

Governance is outstanding. Governors offer wide experience and wisdom to the headteacher and the school, but fully appreciate the need to look critically at the school's work in order to sustain continued improvement. They know the school very well and recognise the advantage of using external criteria as a reference for judging the work of their school.

The local education authority recognises the requirement of developing some of the building so that it meets the standards set by the Department for Education and Science. Inspectors are pleased that these plans are well advanced and agree that governors should continue to pursue this as a priority.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Bettridge School Warden Hill Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 3AT

5th October 2005

Dear Pupils

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for talking with us and for helping us find out about your school. We now want to let you know what we think about your school.

We are very, very pleased with your school. We think that it is among the very best of schools because:

- you like being at school and you like the staff very much, and we know that you work very hard to do your best
- you behave really well in lessons and at other times such as lunchtimes, and are extremely polite in the way in which you deal with each other and with visitors to the school
- your headteacher and the senior teachers are outstanding; they make sure that all the staff, and you, are able to do your best at all times and we like this very much
- your teachers and teaching assistants are excellent; they work very hard and, because you work as hard as they do, you make outstanding progress in your learning and grow up to be really nice young people
- what you learn in your lessons is right for you, and we like the way in which visitors to school, such as the physio, occupational, music and speech and language therapists, help those of you with particular difficulties
- the school has plans to make the buildings better and to keep checking that the school is doing the best it can in all respects; we want the governors to make sure that these things happen.

With best wishes

Dr D Alan Dobbins Lead inspector