



# Batchwood School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117674  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280128  
**Inspection dates** 2 February 2006 to 3 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Mike Kell LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Townsend Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community special		AL3 5RP
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 765195
<b>Number on roll</b>	64	<b>Fax number</b>	01727 761784
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Ms.Penny Williams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Keith Putman

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 February 2006 - 3 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280128
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Batchwood School is the only mixed school in the local authority for secondary aged pupils with social, emotional and behavioural learning difficulties. Consequently, pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds as they live throughout the county. There are twice as many boys as girls. The vast majority of pupils have a White background. All pupils have English as their first language. Approximately 15% of pupils have a Traveller heritage. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The vast majority of pupils have had a severely disrupted education. Almost 50% have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Most arrive at Batchwood other than at the beginning of Year 7. Because of their learning difficulties and disrupted education, pupils' attainment upon entry to the school is below national expectations. Pupils are taught in year groups. Seven classes are based in school, while seven Year 11 pupils are based full time at local colleges. There have been significant changes since the last inspection, particularly following very serious disturbances in April 2003. These disturbances resulted in the short term closure of the school so that new procedures for pupil management could be developed. These focused on reducing the use of restraint and improving the school's ethos. At the same time, a new acting headteacher was appointed. The acting headteacher's position was made permanent in 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The senior leadership team has developed an astute and accurate view of Batchwood School. It is an effective and improving school that provides good value for money. It is successful in meeting its aims. The headteacher's very perceptive leadership has been very ably supported by governors and senior leaders. Together, they have engendered a very strong team ethic amongst the staff. Senior leaders have secured very good improvement since 2003. They remain committed to further strengthening the school's position, and there is great potential for them to achieve this. Leaders gather very useful information from the reviews they carry out on the school's performance, but they do not yet use it selectively. The school provides a good quality of education. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers manage their pupils very well. They give them varied, challenging and interesting activities. As a result, pupils are attentive and keen. They learn well and make good progress, but leaders do not compare the performance of different groups of pupils. Although pupils' levels of attainment are below national expectations, standards are rising. Pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities. They have the opportunity to follow a number of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are cared for well. Recently implemented assessment and pupil tracking systems require refining, but they do give teachers information that they can use to support their pupils. There is good provision for encouraging pupils' personal development. Their social and moral development is encouraged especially well. The school's effective structures for preparing pupils for leaving school are supported by strong community links.

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

- Be more selective in the way self-audit information is used to determine priority areas for development. - Streamline systems for assessing and tracking pupils' achievements and progress. - Compare the relative performances of different groups of pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' levels of attainment remain low compared with national norms as they move through the school. However, there has been a significant improvement in standards in recent years. In 2005, over 30% of pupils, from a group of 15, achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Examination (GCSE) passes at grade A\* - G. No pupils had ever achieved this previously. Pupils make good progress in terms of their prior achievements. Some pupils make very good progress as they become more confident learners and more skilled at managing their own behaviour. Teachers work hard to ensure that no pupil's progress is hindered by their particular circumstances. However, senior leaders do not confirm this by routinely checking that different groups of pupils are achieving as well as they are able. Pupils are successful in achieving their individual targets. These are appropriately challenging and are negotiated with pupils. The daily

sessions aimed at improving pupils' literacy skills have been especially influential in contributing to their improving achievements. Many pupils enter the school with little information about their capabilities. An effective collection of initial assessments is made, such as reading ages, and these are repeated annually. Measures such as this confirm that pupils acquire new skills and make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school is extremely successful in promoting pupils' social and moral development. Pupils know that the staff expect them to treat everyone respectfully and courteously, and to abide by the few simple school rules. Pupils have good opportunities to develop spiritual awareness and to learn about their own and others' cultures. Attendance figures have improved steadily in recent years and the amount of unauthorised absence has fallen. Attendance is now satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy going to school. They behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. Staff strongly encourage pupils' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. They do this through different subjects, such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), and by providing a range of after school sports clubs and games fixtures. Effectively implemented policies also contribute to pupils' health and safety. These include child protection, anti bullying and anti racism procedures. Parents feel confident that their children are not bullied. Pupils are prepared well for leaving school. They have opportunities to take on responsibility and to become involved in the school community, such as being on the school council or producing the pupil newsletter. The work-related learning programme and college links make a strong contribution to preparing pupils for living in the wider community and being in work or college.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are taught well. Teachers are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour. They have high expectations that pupils will conform to the rules, follow routines and apply themselves to the activities they are given. The pupils respond positively to these expectations. Consequently, lessons are orderly and productive as pupils learn with a sense of purpose and direction. Teachers use praise appropriately and apply the school's reward system consistently to further encourage pupils' participation. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers are experienced subject specialists. They provide carefully chosen and challenging activities that match their pupils' needs by building on prior learning. Although lesson plans are detailed, they are not sufficiently explicit in showing what teachers anticipate individual pupils will learn. Lessons are organised efficiently and prepared thoroughly. A good variety of activities is provided. These activities are planned to make the best use of time, but on a very few occasions teachers allow the pace of learning to drift. Systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are still at an early stage. They are developing well,

but the procedures now need to be more cohesive. Teachers regularly evaluate pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to move from one level to the next.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils follow a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. All statutory requirements are met. Particularly strong features of the curriculum include the daily literacy sessions, and a focused PSHE and citizenship programme that contributes greatly to pupils' personal development. A good enrichment programme that includes a variety of extra curricular activities, trips and visitors into school widens and extends pupils' experiences. The school has been creative and flexible in providing learning opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 that best meets the needs of individuals. Most of this age group follow a school based curriculum that prepares them successfully for the accredited examinations they take. This is enhanced well by careers education and work experience, but there is a relatively limited range of work related opportunities. The school has identified a small group of pupils who benefit more from a full time college based course, with a stronger vocational element. This is an effective arrangement for meeting these pupils' needs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils are well cared for and supported. A comprehensive array of policies and procedures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and safety are implemented effectively. The school works very closely with outside agencies such as social services and youth offending teams. This close cooperation is very influential in helping pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Staff are very focused on giving their pupils informed support and guidance. One way in which they do this is through the routine application of the reward system. This recognises the quality of pupils' work as well as their attitudes and behaviour. Teachers use assessment and tracking information to show pupils how they can improve the standards they attain, but these systems need tuning. The school's own provision and its close liaison with the Connexions service and local colleges give pupils very good information that they can use to make career decisions.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior managers have shown themselves to be thoughtful, perceptive and innovative in moving the school forward from its very low point in 2003. Huge strides have been made since then. The team has been very successful in involving all staff and very supportive and informed governors. Consultations with parents and pupils have also contributed to a sense of community and a common wish to improve. Leaders' abilities and commitment are such that there is a great capacity for them to be successful in

continuing to raise standards. The leadership team redefined the school's approach to learning and behaviour management. A school community with a culture of learning and respect illustrates the impact of much of the team's approach. An improved attendance rate, and big reductions in incidents involving the use of physical restraint and the number of exclusions have transformed the school ethos. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved. It is now time for the senior leadership to consolidate its position. For instance, there have been many initiatives involving the assessment, recording and tracking of pupils' progress. These procedures now require streamlining so that everyone is clear about the process and the purpose of collecting data. In addition, the team needs to analyse this data formally and routinely to compare the relative performances of different groups of pupils and to evaluate pupils' achievements in different subjects. The school has thorough and effective mechanisms for judging its own performance. However, leaders do not yet scrutinise this information sufficiently ruthlessly by teasing out the few most important priorities on which they need to focus.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## 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>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### 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>	2	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	2	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>	2	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	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	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>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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**

I really enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you for being so helpful and making me feel welcome. Your contributions to the inspection were valuable. It was very useful to be able to talk with many of you in lessons and at lunchtime. I know from talking with some of the older pupils that the school was a very unhappy place three years ago. You agree that there have been some very big changes since then. The school is now a much more pleasant place. The senior managers in your school have worked very hard to make these improvements. Batchwood is a good school. Teachers make the lessons interesting and they expect you to attend, to be there on time and to work hard. Most of you always do this. You behave properly and are keen to learn. Therefore, the standard of your work improves and many of you are now doing well in your Year 11 examinations. However, it would be helpful if the school checked that all of you are doing as well as you can. I especially like the way the school helps you to grow as young people who are getting ready for leaving school and going to college or into a job. Although Batchwood School already does a good job, the headteacher and other senior members of staff have some exciting ideas about how they can make it even better. However, to be more helpful to you, they will need to decide which are the most important things. Your teachers have begun to assess your work regularly, to share your levels with you and to set targets. This will be even more helpful to you if your teachers streamline these arrangements. Thank you again, and I wish you well in the future.