



Bessels Leigh School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123341
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281448
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Melvyn Blackband AI

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

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|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Bessels Leigh |
| School category | Non-maintained special | | Abingdon |
| Age range of pupils | 10 to 17 | | OX13 5QB |
| Gender of pupils | Boys | Telephone number | 01865 390436 |
| Number on roll | 29 | Fax number | 01865 390688 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Michael Edwards |
| Date of previous inspection | 29 March 2004 | Headteacher | Mr John Boulton |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Bessels Leigh is a non-maintained, residential, special school which provides for secondary-aged pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils are referred by a number of different Local Authorities. While most pupils board during term time only, some boys have placements during the whole year. Most pupils are white British and a small number are from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Ofsted removed the school from 'Special Measures' in March 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has evaluated its performance as satisfactory but this underestimates the quality of the improvements since the previous inspection. Bessels Leigh is a good school. Pupils enjoy being there and make good progress in academic work and in their personal development. Parents are happy for their sons to attend, knowing they are safe and making good progress. Many pupils join the school with a history of low attainment and an inability to adapt to school life. By Year 11, most have caught up with pupils of their age in mainstream schools. Their achievement is good and continues to improve because of very good measures used to assess and record their progress. This leads to challenging and realistic targets supported by the generally good teaching found throughout the school. Pupils are not, however, given enough guidance on their own progress towards achieving their targets and some medical records are not sufficiently monitored.

There is an interesting and wide ranging curriculum. Pupils are involved in the wider community. They are given sound opportunities to be independent and take responsibility for their own actions. The pupils are well supported and their behaviour is managed very well. The school is generally calm and pupils are friendly and supportive of each other. Careers guidance is good. The school is well led and managed at all levels. There is a good capacity to improve building on the good improvement since the previous inspection. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has the determination to meet the continual challenges to raising standards. Finances are well managed, daily routines run smoothly and the school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Boarding provision is good. The accommodation facilities are well kept and regular inspections show that most aspects of the provision are above the national minimum standards for residential provision. Although staff keep appropriate records, these are not always monitored closely enough and there is some inconsistency in the quality of reporting. Relationships between care staff and teachers are good. Essential information about the pupils' well-being is communicated efficiently and this helps to ensure that the pupils are safe and happy and that they are given as much responsibility as they can manage. There is a suitable emphasis on independence and life-skills training. Pupils are regularly taken into the community and make a positive contribution to local groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give clearer guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
- Improve procedures for monitoring the pupils' medical records.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There are good procedures for measuring and recording the progress which pupils make. The quality of assessment when pupils start is very good and their progress is efficiently tracked throughout their time at the school. Because of this teachers are able to ensure that learning targets are realistic and challenging. As a result standards have risen since the last inspection and the pupils achieve well. The pupils, many of whom start from a low level of attainment, are now gaining success in GCSE, comparable to that found in mainstream schools. All pupils are able to reach their potential through a wide range of accredited courses. Pupils meet most of their individual learning targets and the school ensures there is no underachievement by any group or individual. Pupils are not, however, involved sufficiently in their own progress or reminded often enough of their learning targets. Behaviour targets are effective and these have a positive impact on the progress pupils make in their personal development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in maintaining acceptable standards of behaviour. This reflects the school's growing emphasis on, and success in, helping the pupils understand their actions and how they impact on others. Much of the school's work is successfully underpinned by the Restorative Practice initiative. The school is generally calm and pupils work and socialise happily because they feel secure and know what is expected of them. This is reinforced by an effective reward system. Their spiritual, moral and social understanding is good. Staff effectively encourage the pupils in discussions in circle time to quietly reflect on the needs and wishes of individuals in the wider school community. The pupils feel safe. Where bullying occurs it is dealt with appropriately. Pupils who are involved in incidents are helped to understand why their behaviour is unacceptable and this is backed up by well constructed programmes in personal, social and health education which help the boys to make sense of their relationships with others.

The school ensures that the pupils eat healthily and have many opportunities to take part in physical activities. Some medical records however, while appropriate, are not collated regularly or efficiently monitored. Pupils have opportunities to make their views known, such as in the recently formed school council and so contribute to the life of the school. The good progress the pupils make in literacy and numeracy, together with the many opportunities they have to take part in work experience, helps to prepare them for adult life. Communication with parents is good and they generally feel positive about their sons' progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although there is some variation in the quality of teaching, which senior staff are well aware of, the general level of teaching and hence of the pupils' learning is good and has maintained the improvement noted in the previous report. Lessons are rigorously monitored by senior staff. Teachers know their pupils well and adapt work for each individual. They ensure that learning targets are realistic and challenging and in this are supported by a very good school system of planning and assessment. Because work is very well matched to pupils' ability, lessons are characterised by pupils' concentration and eagerness to learn and by consequent good behaviour. The pupils make good progress in lessons. They generally like and respect their teachers since they feel confident that they will be well taught. Teachers do not, however, give pupils sufficient guidance on how well they are doing. Pupils come to lessons expecting to learn new things and to work hard. They support each other in lessons, for example in a Year 10 lesson where each pupil felt confident to read aloud despite experiencing some difficulties with the complexity of the material.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy purposeful and interesting activities within clearly constructed national curriculum programmes. Pupils have opportunities to gain GCSE and other qualifications in each subject. There is a wide range of learning activities supplemented by frequent trips into the community. These teach the boys that new things can be learned in all sorts of situations. The needs of each pupil are effectively met because teachers adapt work appropriately to the pupils' ability. There are good arrangements for the teaching of personal, health and social skills and in teaching about adult responsibilities in citizenship lessons. The pupils' personal development is well supported by care staff. There is particularly good provision for work-related learning. Pupils follow well-designed vocational courses and have many opportunities to take part in work experience and to learn about their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care provided by the school is good. Secure child protection procedures are in place, which are understood by all staff. There is appropriate monitoring of health and safety and there are risk assessments for all activities. Some medical records, however, are not regularly monitored. Pupils feel safe and this makes a good contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. The school is continuing to develop systems of behaviour management which emphasise the pupils' understanding of personal responsibility. The pupils are well supported in this by pastoral and learning mentors. Pupils are fully involved in their Annual Reviews and in setting behavioural targets.

There is a good standard of careers guidance and preparation for life after school. Although there are good procedures to assess and record their progress, pupils do not have a good understanding of their own progress. They are unsure of their achievements and how best to improve their work. Although all pupils have individual learning targets these are seldom referred to in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has continued to make significant improvements since it was taken out of special measures at the last inspection. The governing body has played a crucial and valuable part in challenging the school's leadership to maintain progress. This has been achieved through very good team work and good management by the head teacher and senior staff. Governors and the school's leaders are committed to high standards. There are high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning are monitored regularly and effectively. The school emphasises a therapeutic approach to pupils' needs which has a positive effect on their achievement. Procedures for evaluating staff performance are developing; these will focus teachers' professional development on the needs of the school and ensure awareness of current national practices.

Good use is made of assessment information to plan improvements in curriculum provision and to track and help improve the pupils' attainment. Pupils are not however made sufficiently aware of their own progress. Managers have established successful formal and informal procedures to monitor, evaluate and improve on aspects of the school's performance. The school development plan is clear and provides a good basis for improvement. Parents feel involved in the life of the school. The school has convincingly demonstrated its capacity to improve since the previous inspection and remains in a good position to continue this improvement.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 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

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 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

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 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 | 3 | 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

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

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? | 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 | 2 | 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 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 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

Pupils

Not long ago I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether there was anything I could suggest that would make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you. Thank you and well done!

I was only with you for one day. That was long enough for me to realise that Bessels Leigh is a good school. One of the reasons is that you make good progress in learning to behave sensibly and in trying to get on with others. I particularly enjoyed visiting you in the classrooms and seeing the good work you were doing. There were lots of other things that I liked. Here are a few: * you obviously enjoy school and do well * the many different people working at the school do their best to look after you * you are able to be as independent as possible and to take responsibility for your own actions * you are learning about the community and about working life; this will help you when you leave school.

There are two things I felt would make the school better. The first one is if teachers helped you to understand better how well you are doing in your work in lessons. The second one was for care staff to keep clearer records of any medical problems you might have.

Best wishes,

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector