



Fitzwaryn School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123342
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281449
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Michael Whitehead AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Denchworth Road
School category	Community special		Wantage
Age range of pupils	3 to 16		Oxfordshire OX12 9ET
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01235764504
Number on roll	60	Fax number	01235768728
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Matthews
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs B Harker

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Description of the school

Fitzwaryn School is a Community Special school, which caters for boys and girls whose ages range from three to sixteen years. Pupils have learning difficulties that range from moderate to severe and profound and some pupils have additional difficulties including autistic spectrum disorders, physical difficulties, hearing and visual impairment and speech or communication difficulties. The school is situated in a residential area of Wantage and pupils come from a wide catchment area. The school includes a Foundation Stage class which is situated in a neighbouring primary school. Fitzwaryn School has a new headteacher who was the previous deputy headteacher. The school provides an outreach service for children in the Foundation Stage, and works closely with local mainstream schools and nurseries. Each year, the number of pupils on roll falls; this is partly due to the success of the outreach service. Consequently, the new pupils admitted to Fitzwaryn School have more severe difficulties. The expertise and success of the school are widely acknowledged and have been recognised through a variety of awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Fitzwaryn School is an outstanding school, which ensures that all pupils achieve extremely well and reach their highest possible standards. The inspector agrees with all the positive views expressed by the school concerning its effectiveness and believes that in some areas the school's judgements are rather harsh, underestimating the quality of provision. This is a clear reflection of the very high expectations that the school has. Taking account of the outstanding quality of education, care and support, the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and governors and the falling roll, that has a detrimental effect upon the cost per pupil, this school provides good value for money. The main strengths of the school lie in the outstanding quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage and the consistently good and often excellent teaching that takes place in the rest of the school. There are very strong, effective links with other schools, colleges, the Wantage Partnerships of Schools, the Faringdon Partnerships of Schools and the Ridgeway Partnerships of Schools which result in outstanding collaborative work for the benefit of Fitzwaryn School. The excellent work in the Integrated Foundation Stage Class provides an extremely effective transition into the school at the age of six. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity for further development that will be needed to meet the ever changing situation that faces this school.

What the school should do to improve further

* Involve the Local Education Authority to ensure that the skills and expertise within the school are spread further into the community in order to secure its future.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The progress made by pupils is outstanding and there is no variation between different groups. The standards reached by the majority of pupils are well below the national average because of their learning difficulties and other special needs. It is generally inappropriate to compare the levels reached by these pupils with those reached by their peers in mainstream schools. However, records show that, for some pupils, the progress that they make is at least as good as that made by pupils in mainstream schools and this is despite their learning difficulties. All pupils make substantial progress from whatever level they start. The exceptional quality of assessment and recording of progress enables teachers to plan effectively. Lessons are designed to suit every pupil, having aims that are appropriately challenging and exciting. This ensures that pupils make the maximum possible progress. There are outstanding procedures for assessing pupils' ability levels when they join the school. This information is used extremely well by all teachers to make sure that each pupil has an individual education plan that contains targets that are appropriate. These targets are challenging and under constant review. The school records every pupil's level of work and progress. This information is studied carefully and lessons are planned to help every pupil make

the best possible progress. In Key Stages 3 and 4 one third of pupils, for whom reading is difficult, are making progress that stops them falling further away from their chronological age and nearly all pupils are making significant progress in reading. In English at Key Stage 2 the results from tests show that pupils have made progress beyond expectations. For example, pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have made better progress than that of pupils in similar schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school ethos and code of conduct is rooted in mutual respect. This pervades the whole school, throughout every part of the day and every activity. Pupils practice the code of conduct very effectively. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are caring, friendly, helpful and loyal to their friends, their class and their school. Occasionally pupils' behaviour is inappropriate and they need to be reprimanded. This is done in a very caring and understanding manner. For example, in one class when a child had to be reprimanded for misbehaviour, the relationship between the teacher and the pupil was so good that the pupil in trouble stayed very close to the teacher of his own accord receiving comfort and security from the proximity. The matter was dealt with in a non-confrontational manner and within less than one minute, the pupil was back on task and working well. Clearly the pupil knew that what he had done was wrong. The social development of pupils is excellent. They make sure that each has sufficient space to move around, especially if a child is in a wheelchair or has difficulty in walking. Pupils encourage each other to be polite and say please and thank you and enjoy praising and applauding each other for the good things that they do. They are extremely courteous and make visitors feel welcome. Displays around the school show the extent of the carefully planned cultural development. There are special times when the school entertains artists in residence. The grounds are adorned with the large carved and sculpted totem pole which resulted from their studies of North American Indians. Similar studies have focused on other countries when pupils learn about the language, culture, religions, costumes and food. In all activities pupils are smiling and clearly enjoy being at school. They anticipate their lessons with eager excitement, enjoy their break times when they can talk and play together, and enjoy their meal times when they can socialise and look after each other. They follow the excellent example set by all staff. The school council has been in existence for one year and comprises representatives from each class. Senior pupils represent the views and wishes of those who are younger or less able. The school ensures that pupils follow a healthy diet and encourage pupils at all times to eat nourishing foods.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are good in almost all lessons and often they are outstanding. Lessons are extremely well planned and this ensures that all pupils make progress in learning. Teachers take a great deal of care to make sure that lessons are planned to meet the wide range of differing needs among the pupils within their classes. Work done by pupils is carefully marked and the results are recorded and regularly moderated by other teachers. This ensures equality and adds a great deal of value to the data that is collected concerning the progress made by pupils. For the majority of pupils the work is graded using 'P' levels and a commercially produced system that breaks down the P scales into clear manageable steps. Teachers identify clearly and accurately the progress of each child and also the areas where there may be some difficulty. Teachers have very high expectations and set challenging targets for the pupils who respond well, are highly motivated and fully involved in the assessment of their work. They take a responsibility for their own learning and this generates an excellent climate for learning. Teachers are very highly skilled in managing pupils and meeting the wide range of individual needs within each group. This is an element of the school that is changing continually as the number on roll falls and the needs of the pupils become more complex. The work of the teaching assistants is outstanding; all take lead roles in activities and have positions of responsibility within the school. For example, two teaching assistants are responsible for leading the motor skills sessions every morning before lessons start. This is a very significant part of the school day and involves everyone.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a very broad and balanced curriculum that is audited on a regular basis to ensure that it meets fully with statutory requirements. Lessons are planned very carefully to meet national curriculum requirements at an appropriate level. The basic curriculum is enhanced greatly by many other areas of study and special activities. There is a major focus on staying safe and being healthy. Every morning all pupils take part in a motor-sensory programme, which gives them a simple but rigorous workout for ten minutes. This is a very positive and healthy start to the day. Seniors take part in power walking sessions which have proved to be very successful in improving their health. There is a carefully planned work related learning component and pupils participate in arranged work experience and benefit from the visits of officers from Connexions. Many pupils in the younger classes are able to work in a variety of mainstream primary schools alongside their peers for half a day each week. This results from the excellent arrangements that are possible through the members of the Wantage partnership of schools. The foundation stage curriculum is excellent and works as an integrated curriculum in a mainstream setting at the near-by primary school. Both special school and mainstream children benefit from the very high quality of teaching

and resources that are available. There is an excellent variety of educational visits, which include sports functions, residentials, riding for the disabled (RDA), Country Weeks, visits to museums and access to local amenities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all pupils. This contributes strongly to the impeccable behaviour displayed by pupils and their excellent levels of attendance. The school is safe and secure. Pupils enjoy the clearly established routines and the high expectations to which they are expected to aspire. Pupils take part in their own reviews and assessment of their progress and this is facilitated extremely well by the teachers. The school has devised communication systems that allow a pictorial record to be kept of the annual reviews. This enables pupils who have more severe communication difficulties, to contribute. The overriding climate of mutual respect, helps to increase pupils' self-esteem and give them confidence. Pupils talk comfortably with adults and are confident in being able to speak with teachers and assistants if they are worried about themselves or have any problems. Child protection procedures are properly in place and observed. There is very careful risk assessment concerning any lesson or activity both in school and off-site. There are very close links with parents and most pupils have a home-school diary that is used to keep parents informed and for parents to share information with the school. Parents are very positive about the school as a whole.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The recently appointed headteacher has made an excellent start in continuing the work of the school. The total commitment of the headteacher and her staff enables the school to be extremely effective in providing an excellent standard of education. The headteacher has a very clear knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. She acts effectively upon any shortcomings and ensures that staff are able to work to their strengths. Well established procedures are in place that allowed a relative weakness to be identified recently and procedures were implemented very quickly in order to resolve the problem. Teachers who hold management responsibilities are also very committed to the work of the school and meeting the needs of the pupils. This atmosphere ensures a strong team with a common goal to strive for excellence. Monitoring and professional development is highly valued by all staff and allows regular challenge at all levels creating healthy debate and reinforcing very high morale amongst staff. Joint planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons enable staff to be valued and fully involved in the development of education in the school. The school's self-evaluation is excellent. Teaching assistants are highly effective and greatly appreciated. They take sole responsibility for some of the aspects of the school's work. For example, the motor-sensory programme that takes place each morning is planned, developed and delivered by teaching assistants. The governance of the school is

outstanding. Governors are very closely involved in the work of the school and are fully aware of the strengths and quality of provision. They are also aware of the difficulties facing the school as the numbers on roll continue to fall. The leadership has the capacity to improve the school even more but is at some risk because the falling roll reduces the school's budget year on year. Consequently, the school is not in a position to appoint a deputy headteacher and is limited to appointing an assistant head. The range of ability within each class group is also widening because there are insufficient pupils to enable any setting of groups especially for English and mathematics. The school's capacity to plan strategically is further impeded by the current uncertainty surrounding local authority plans for the education of boys and girls of all ages who have special educational needs and particularly those who are over the age of sixteen.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

Thank you all for making me welcome during the inspection of your school. I really enjoyed talking with you about your school.

I am delighted to tell you that I believe you have an outstanding school. You have an outstanding Headteacher and an excellent group of Governors who are very skilled in managing the school. The teachers and teaching assistants are excellent and help you learn extremely well. The levels of care, guidance and support that you receive from staff are excellent. This enables you to make excellent progress in your studies. The behaviour in school is excellent and I am extremely impressed by the way in which everyone looks after everyone else.

There is just one thing that is necessary to make the school even better in the future. The Headteacher and Governors need to make sure that the local authority is fully involved in planning for the future. This is because, as you know, the numbers of pupils in your school is getting less each year. It is very important that your excellent school continues long into the future; even if it has to change in order to do this. Thank you again for being so helpful.