



Beacon Hill School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134767
LEA THURROCK LEA
Inspection number 282685
Inspection dates 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Ian Naylor AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Errif Drive
School category	Community special		RM15 5AY
Age range of pupils	4 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01708 852006
Number on roll	87	Fax number	01708 851679
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr.Tony Fish
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Richard Milligan

Age group 4 to 18	Inspection dates 19 June 2006 - 20 June 2006	Inspection number 282685
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2004 under a new headteacher and governing body following the amalgamation of two former special schools. Further education provision is provided on a separate site. Both sites are temporary and a new building is planned. Pupils have a wide range of learning needs which are becoming increasingly complex on admission to the school. They include moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning, communication, visual impairment and sensory needs. Attainment on admission is very low. Most pupils are from a White British heritage and many have a low socio-economic background. The school provides an outreach service to local mainstream schools for physical needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Beacon Hill is a good school that gives good value for money. Inspectors agree with the school's own view of itself. There is a calm purposeful atmosphere in the school and pupils are well supported in their learning. The school has made rapid progress in its development since its amalgamation two years ago. This is because of the good leadership of the headteacher. The school is also supported well by governors and by the advice from the school's own educational consultants. Together they provide a clear focus and direction for the staff team. They have set up a good management structure and school organisation which has helped to improve and consolidate all areas of provision. There is a strong commitment to and capacity for further improvement. Senior staff work together successfully. They have responded well to their new areas of responsibility. A high priority given to securing good quality teaching, to supporting pupils' learning and to enriching the curriculum. Staff support pupils well and take every consideration for their needs. This means that pupils are happy, enjoy learning and feel safe and secure in school. They are very proud of their achievements. There are positive relationships between adults and pupils with high expectations of good behaviour and responses. As a result attendance is good and behaviour is excellent. The school provides a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), and physical activities, which together actively promote pupils' healthy living. Consequently pupils make sustained progress in their self-confidence, maturity and social-skills. This is why pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Teaching has improved owing to the school's careful monitoring and its commitment to professional development and training. There is now a strong core of good teaching that ensures that pupils' achievement is good, especially in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The school has satisfactory assessment systems but could improve the quality of its analysis of its data on pupil performance. There is a need to make recording and marking of pupils' work and pupil involvement in feedback and assessment consistently applied across the school. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good; children make rapid progress especially in their social and communication skills. Older students are well prepared for adult life.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

N/A

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the school's analysis of data about pupils' performance. - Improve the consistency of recording, the marking of work and pupils' involvement in feedback and self-assessment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They make progress towards achieving their individual education plans targets with a good rate of success. They improve well in their speaking and listening and communication skills. Pupils' achievement is good across all key stages in literacy, numeracy, and ICT. It is also at least good with some outstanding examples of progress in physical education and music. At Key Stage 4 and at post-16 some students gain national awards in Entry Level English and mathematics. Most achieve success in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Bronze, Transition Challenge or Towards Independence courses. Students of all abilities achieve successful work experience placements and employers report how pleased they are with students' responses to an adult working environment. Many students make a successful transition to college courses at age sixteen. Positive feedback from parents suggests they are happy with their children's progress. Pupils with visual and sensory needs are making satisfactory progress as a result of the additional teaching support they have received. All other groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. This is the result of a concerted and well-coordinated approach across the school from all staff to promote all aspects of pupils' emotional and social development. A wide range of physical and sporting activities means that pupils have lots of opportunities to build confidence in their physical abilities. These are further supported by the MOVE programme (Movement Opportunities Via Education) and regular support from physiotherapy. Pupils get great enjoyment from all the activities and opportunities provide for them and are very happy to talk about what they have achieved. They are keen to attend school and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils understand that they need to keep healthy by eating sensible foods and can make sensible choices from the lunchtime menu. The school cook provides a variety of nutritious foods; pupils have responded well to this and now eat more healthily. Older pupils successfully run a school tuck shop that provides healthy snacks. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Their excellent relationships with staff mean they always have someone to talk to if they have any concerns. Older students make the most of the many opportunities to extend their knowledge of the local and wider community through shopping trips, visits and work experience. They learn how to cope in the adult world and make outstanding progress in their social relationships and awareness. Students are mature, confident and responsible. A student on placement in a pet shop was confident and happy and said he liked the work. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education are good. Pupils of all ages are helpful to one another, aware of their responsibilities to themselves and the school. They make their views heard through the school council and participate in county pupil initiatives. They have a good understanding that there are differences in other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school has worked hard to make sure that teaching is consistently good in all areas. This has not been fully achieved, but there is a broad base of good teaching from experienced staff. This gives the necessary support to pupils' learning to enable them to make good progress overall. Teaching is very responsive to pupils' needs. It engages pupils' interest through the use of practical experiences and relevant activities. There is very good use of strategies such as Picture Exchange Communications Systems (PECS) and of signing, and symbols. The impact of these is evident in pupils' good learning in their literacy and communication, but also from the way they develop in their social skills. Good use is made by staff of ICT to support pupils' learning. There are many additional skills and much expertise amongst the teaching team in areas such as sensory support, music, physical education and there is good sharing of best practice. Staff work well with therapists, colleagues and partners from many other external agencies and schools. This helps them to effectively support pupils across a wide range of enriching learning activities. Relationships with pupils are of high quality and there is good teamwork. This, together with high expectations and clear strategies for supporting pupils' behaviour, helps pupils to succeed. There is careful planning that is responsive to pupils' individual education plans. However, there is more work to be done to further extend the systems for assessment, recording and marking. The school has plans to involve learning support assistants more directly in some of these during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The school has quickly established a good pattern of activities and opportunities for pupils that are highly relevant and which give good support to their personal development and learning. Planning is good and consistently applied across all areas. It reflects the needs of all groups and abilities of pupils in the school. The school is addressing the more complex needs of pupils being referred through adopting a flexible response. The curriculum is built around the six areas of learning and is carefully monitored to ensure that it meets the subject requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a wide range of activities to enrich the curriculum including visits out of school and visitors and theatre groups that come into school. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good and gives good support to children as they start in school. The curriculum in the post-16 provision is an emerging strength and staff have plans for further developments. Opportunities for work-experience are already well established and are very successful in promoting students' personal development and overall achievements. College links have been successfully re-established and the school has plans for all students to be able to attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care for pupils is very strong because staff are willing to go the extra mile, are well trained and skilled enough to deliver the high levels of support needed by pupils. Close partnership with external agencies is helping to ensure that pupils' quite specific needs are well catered for. The school is pro-active in seeking their own specialists to redress shortfalls. For example, the school employs a speech therapist who delivers a focussed individual service. There is high quality medical care because of rigorous working practices and a strong commitment to extending expertise. Emergency services respond well to the school's increasing requests but the regular input of a trained medical professional is not available. The school nurse service has not been present in the school for some years now. This is an issue about which inspectors agree with the school, that this should be urgently resolved in the interest of pupils' and their families. There is good attention to protecting potentially vulnerable pupils and child protection procedures are secure. The school's systems for tracking and evaluating pupil performance are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team, under the skilful direction of the headteacher, has quickly established a clear sense of direction and purpose. This has enabled it to move forward the developments for the new school very quickly. It has been very well supported in this by the educational consultants, by the governors and by the other senior managers. Roles and responsibilities have been established and a good system of management is in place. The final piece of the senior management structure will be in place when the newly appointed permanent second deputy headteacher takes up post in the new academic year. There is a good spirit of cooperation and teamwork linked to a strong commitment to professional development, and this is increasing staff skills. Good attention had been given to staff's well-being which has supported staff morale during difficult times of change. This has helped to overcome many of the teething problems of establishing a new school. The school improvement plan establishes clear and realistic priorities. It enables senior managers to make secure evaluations about the quality of provision in the school and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Parents, pupils and other groups in the local and wider community are regularly consulted about their views of the school. The school works successfully with many local partners including schools and colleges. The school has successfully established an outreach service to support pupils' in primary schools who have a physical need and is developing a similar provision for ICT.

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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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	2	
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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

You may remember that my colleague and I visited your school recently. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and for letting us join your lessons and look at your work. We enjoyed talking to you and it quickly became clear how much you enjoy school and all the interesting things you have to do. You are quite rightly proud of all your many achievements! We think you work hard in lessons. We liked the way you help one another and we think that your behaviour is good. We think you understand very well how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy; for example, you make sensible choices from the super lunch menu! We were very impressed when we talked to those of you who are post-16 students. You are mature and sensible and clearly becoming responsible young adults. Work experience employers say good things about the work you do. We feel that the headteacher and staff do a good job to make sure that you all make good progress in your work and that you are happy in school. We have talked to them about ways of making things even better. We think teachers could improve the way they check on how well you are doing in lessons and help you to understand more about the best way to help yourselves improve. Wish best wishes for the future. Yours sincerely