



Beaucroft Foundation School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113956
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289767
Inspection date 23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Wimborne Road
School category	Foundation		Colehill
Age range of pupils	4-17		Wimborne BH21 2SS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 886083
Number on roll (school)	131	Fax number	01202 848459
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Botterill
		Headteacher	Paul McGill
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties provides specialist provision for the southern region of Dorset and takes a good number from neighbouring local authorities. Increasingly, pupils are being admitted with additional and complex needs, such as those to do with autism. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. A small number are from ethnic minorities. The school holds a number of prestigious awards including, in the recent past, Beacon status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Beacroft Foundation School is a good school, with many outstanding features. Parents and carers are very pleased with the school because their children are happy there and prosper as young people and as learners. Staff care for, guide and support pupils exceptionally well. Because of this, pupils make outstanding progress in developing their personal and social skills and are prepared outstandingly well for life after school. Pupils enjoy school. They attend regularly and, after account is taken of the difficulties a small number have in controlling their behaviour, behaviour in lessons and throughout the school is excellent.

Standards are below average because of pupils' difficulties with learning. Achievement is good. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve well, but would do even better if teaching and learning and the curriculum were not affected by deficiencies in the accommodation. Teaching is good overall and pupils work as hard as they can, and enjoy doing so because the teachers and their assistants make learning fun. Nevertheless, skilled and committed staff are not always able to teach to their best. Too many lessons take place in classrooms that are too small, some subjects do not have appropriate specialist facilities and there is too little space for staff to prepare materials for their lessons.

Accommodation issues do not limit pupils' learning in the Foundation Stage or in Years 10 and 11, and in both cases achievement is outstanding due to the excellent curriculum and to teaching that proceeds without restrictions. As a result, children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress over all the early learning areas and pupils in Years 10 and 11 make equivalent progress in readying themselves to continue their learning at local colleges. Staff are proud that national data show that last year's Year 11 pupils exceeded the targets set for them in Year 6 sufficiently well for the school to be placed in the top 20% of schools for promoting progress. The overall good curriculum is very effectively extended in a number of ways, especially through the considerable programme of residential visits that make a significant contribution to the outstanding progress pupils make in developing their personal and social skills.

Leadership and management are good and ensure that the school is a safe, caring and friendly place where pupils can thrive. The headteacher and senior leaders make an effective team in securing improvement and they are supported very well by governors. Data are very well used to provide information on the progress of individual pupils and to identify individual learning needs. Data are used less well in comparing the progress of different groups of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment information to show where achievement and provision could be even better.
- Improve the accommodation so that teaching and learning can occur without hindrance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Parents and carers are delighted with the progress their children make. One said of her son, 'He is doing brilliantly well'; another said that, 'Since starting at Beaucroft he is a changed person. He has only been there a short time but he has come on amazingly.'

Although standards are below average, pupils' achievement is good. In the Foundation Stage, very high quality teaching provides an excellent match with pupils' learning and additional needs and the result of this is outstanding progress over each of the early learning areas. Over Years 1 to 9, pupils make good progress, but progress is better in the few subjects with specialist rooms, such as science. In the subjects without specialist facilities, such as physical education, art and design and design and technology, progress is not as good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make outstanding progress, again due to the outstanding curriculum and to excellent teaching. Pupils show the extent of their learning by the wide range of qualifications gained, including units of the Assessment and Qualifications Authority (AQA), ASDAN bronze and silver, Life Skills and Transition Challenge awards. Last year nine pupils achieved the ASDAN silver award, a record for the school. Staff are very proud that for the last two years each of the Year 11 pupils left school to join courses at local colleges to continue their learning in accord with their needs and interests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school is a welcoming place, where every child matters. Pupils quickly develop outstandingly strong relationships with staff and because they feel safe and comfortable at school, they thrive. They enjoy school, show very positive attitudes to their work and attend very regularly. They know that staff will take care of them when they are troubled and that they will share, and most often resolve, any problems they have. Behaviour throughout the school is extremely good, although some pupils with complex difficulties sometimes find self-control difficult. However, the consistent application of clear targets by all staff helps those pupils gain increasing control of their behaviour so that they are able to commit themselves more frequently to their learning and to more readily share work with their classmates. When there are issues, they are often solved by the good work of fellow pupils who are the Friendship Crew. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As pupils mature they enjoy the increasing opportunities to take responsibility and to work co-operatively in groups. Lessons, assemblies and visitors to the school are used very well in helping pupils learn about spiritual beliefs and about the lifestyles of those from different cultures. Older pupils have regular experiences of the economics of the adult world through visits to local shopping areas, and the student council works exceptionally well in increasing pupils' awareness of the process of government. Council members take great pride in explaining that it was through their work that more healthy food choices are now available at lunchtime.

Parents and carers of children who transferred from other schools say the improvement in their progress as young people is remarkable. Those of pupils in the oldest years are quick to say that when their children were younger they never believed that they would grow up to behave so maturely and to be as independent as they are.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

All teachers and their assistants know their pupils very well. They use this information effectively in planning lessons around targets for learning that are precisely founded on what pupils know and can do, so that their personal learning needs are met. This is done consistently well for children in the Foundation Stage, pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for those in the autistic classes, and in many of these lessons pupils make outstanding progress. For the other pupils, planning sometimes does not match with their learning needs, most often because of the struggle staff have in teaching as well as they can in difficult circumstances. Some classrooms are excellent bases for learning, but too many are not. The small size of some rooms limits how teaching can proceed and the lack of appropriate specialist facilities, notably for physical education, art and design and some aspects of design and technology, restricts what can be taught.

All teachers and their assistants make very good use of specialist teaching approaches, such as the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH), and of signs, symbols and pictures to ensure that pupils understand their tasks well enough to be able to complete them. Pupils are comfortable as learners and, through their excellent behaviour and by working hard to do their best, show that they have fully accepted the routines and expectations for learning. As a result, most lessons are happy events, characterised by the laughter of staff and pupils alike, where pupils have fun when working hard to complete their tasks. In a small number of lessons, information and communication technology is not used well enough in supporting learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good for most of the pupils, but is outstanding for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Children in the Foundation Stage are prepared outstandingly well for their work in Year 1 because each of the early learning areas is covered so well. The very close links with colleges and specific programmes, such as the independent travel and sea safety programmes, make important contributions to the outstanding way that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are prepared for the next stage of their learning.

The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 9 is good because it broadly meets all national requirements, but deficiencies in the accommodation make some parts of some subjects difficult to teach, and the absence of an adequate library restricts opportunities for

pupils to develop the skills of independent learning. Specialists, such as the physio, occupational and speech and language therapists, meet the additional needs of pupils reasonably well, although the absence of any dedicated room space makes it difficult for them to be fully effective in their work.

The extensive programme of residential visits reinforces learning in the lessons in personal, social and health education exceptionally well by helping pupils become more self-confident and assured, as they become increasingly mature and independent. In the same way, pupils benefit from regular and very well planned opportunities to join with mainstream pupils in their schools and, through the extensive and very effective Buddy Programme, to work with them at Beaucroft School. In the discrete classes for pupils with autism, those pupils gain excellent additional support that enables them to achieve very well and play as full a part in the life of the school as they are able.

The outreach provision, which provides support for pupils and teachers in mainstream schools, is very well respected and growing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Caring for, guiding and supporting pupils are seen as fundamental to the school's ethos of providing a nurturing base from which every pupil can grow to be a happy and responsible young person. They are achieved outstandingly well for a number of reasons. Pupils are safe and secure at school because child protection procedures and those for assessing risk are rigorous and applied consistently by all staff. All requirements relating to statements of special educational needs are met.

The thrust to 'personalise' pupils' learning is working very well because precise and relevant targets provide high quality support to guide each pupil's learning. As a consequence, new learning is firmly based on what pupils know and can do and this contributes to the good and sometimes outstanding progress they make. The links with a wide variety of outside agencies are very well established and the very effective work of the Connexions adviser contributes to the easy transfer of Year 11 pupils to appropriate courses at local colleges. However, the work of the different therapists who visit the school and other specialists, such as the paediatrician and the nurses, is affected by a lack of any dedicated space and, as such, they are only able to meet with pupils in corridors or at the back of classrooms, while lessons are proceeding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets the highest expectations for the work of pupils and staff alike and all staff are committed to ensuring that pupils prosper. The senior leadership team is strong. They oversee well embedded procedures that make the school a calm and organised place, where pupils are happy and eagerly work hard to do their best. Middle managers are equally effective in their roles.

The school accurately identifies areas for improvement and takes appropriate action. The headteacher is leading a number of good developments including restructuring the arrangements for grouping pupils to provide more 'personalised' learning, and increasing the training opportunities for all staff through better performance management procedures. These developments have made clear contributions to both raising achievement, by extending pupils' learning experiences, and securing the outstanding level of care provided to each pupil by enhancing the skills of staff. Data are used very well in providing a strong focus on individual achievement but used less effectively in showing the relative progress of different groups of pupils.

Governors meet their remit to the school and provide good support to the headteacher. They have rightly encouraged him to engage in dialogue with the local authority over the formula for identifying the school's money, given that more pupils with increasingly complex learning difficulties are joining the school. They form a strong team with the senior leaders and, collectively, have a good capacity for continuing to develop the school; but rightly realise that this is limited by the constraints imposed by the deficiencies in the accommodation.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for helping us find out about your school. We were very impressed with your school and think that it provides you with a good education overall, and that some parts are outstanding. We especially liked:

- The fact that your achievement is good and that some of you make outstanding progress.
- The way the staff look after you. They make sure that you are safe and comfortable at school.
- The way you develop as young people. You take responsibility very well, behave excellently, work very hard in your lessons and are very polite to visitors.
- The way the headteacher and senior leaders make the school such a good place for learning, for example by giving you many exciting chances to stay away overnight on the residential visits and to meet pupils from other schools, in their schools and in your own school.
- The good teaching you receive including some outstanding teaching. We know that you have fun in lessons because in every lesson we visited you were laughing and enjoying yourselves as you worked as hard as you could.

There are two things we would like improved:

- We would like the senior leaders to make better use of the information they gain on how well the different groups of you are doing.
- We would like the building to be better so that you do not have to feel crowded in any of the classrooms.

With best wishes, and please keep working as hard as you can.