



The Bridge School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123635
Local Authority Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number 292727
Inspection dates 14–15 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	Grange Avenue
School category	Community special		Stirchley
Age range of pupils	2–19		Telford TF3 1UP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01952 417020
Number on roll (school)	151	Fax number	01952 417022
Number on roll (6th form)	22		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ivy Nicklin
		Headteacher	Una Van-den-Berg
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

Age group 2–19	Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006	Inspection number 292727
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with severe, and profound and multiple, learning difficulties. The school serves the Borough of Telford and Wreking, but some pupils come from the adjacent county of Shropshire. It includes an assessment nursery where up to 40 pupils undergo statutory assessment for statements of special educational needs. All the other pupils have statements. A small number are from ethnic minorities and a high proportion is eligible for free school meals. Currently the school has two sites. The school will move to a new custom-designed building in January 2007, which incorporates a mainstream primary and secondary school and community facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Bridge School is a good school, with many outstanding features. It is led outstandingly well by the headteacher, who gains the considerable support of all who work there. As a result, the school is a place that is enjoyed by pupils and staff, and where both work hard to do their best. It is very much appreciated by parents, who are fulsome in their praise.

The outstanding way in which pupils are cared for, guided and supported helps them make excellent gains in their personal and social skills and in learning to communicate in their quest for independence. Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They feel comfortable, safe and confident because they know that staff care for them very much and will always help them when they are troubled. Behaviour is excellent and they routinely work as hard as they can to please their teachers.

Achievement is good, although standards are significantly below average because of the serious difficulties pupils have with their learning. Nevertheless, children in the Foundation Stage achieve excellently and are prepared outstandingly well for their work in Year 1, either in the school or in the mainstream school they move to. In Years 1 to 11 and in the sixth form, pupils' achievement is good. The impact of inadequate accommodation affects both teaching and learning, which in turn limits pupils' achievement and the curriculum, except in the Foundation Stage. Deficiencies in the accommodation constrain the ways in which teaching can occur and limit what can be taught. As a result, highly skilled teachers are not always able to teach to their true capabilities and because of this, teaching and learning are good, overall. There is a good curriculum but the deficiencies in accommodation limit the range of what is provided. Leadership and management are outstanding and the school is supported very well by governors. The commitment of senior leaders to making the school as good as is possible is clearly seen in the detail of the procedures that operate over all parts of the school. Both leadership and management are very effective at all levels and their impact is shown not only by pupils' good achievement but also by the school gaining a number of prestigious awards, including school achievement awards, and recognition as a centre of excellence for training and for using information and communication technology (ICT) in support of learning. Leaders have a good knowledge of their school because the procedures for recording attainment and recognising progress are good and developing strongly, although there is not yet a sharp enough and consistent focus on using pupils' progress as a key element in judging the overall effectiveness of the school.

The pending move to excellent new accommodation removes the school's only real barrier to raising achievement to the highest of levels. Given this, the capacity for improvement is outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision for students in the sixth form is good. Teaching is good and students achieve well over a curriculum that is appropriately designed to help them become as independent as possible. Relationships between staff and students are outstanding. Over their time in the sixth form, they gain in confidence as they become increasingly independent. It is a credit to staff that students achieve as well as they do as the accommodation limits the development of their personal and social skills and their learning. The links with the local college and private training bases are used well in providing experiences of places that are more predominantly adult than the school environment. Nevertheless, not having a common room reduces opportunities to socialise and to meet with visitors, and the lack of a useable flat means that students have too few opportunities to practise the skills of independence. In the new school, the sixth form accommodation has been very well thought through and is an exceptional base for preparing students for inclusive living.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information better in judging the effectiveness of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although standards are significantly below average because of pupils' learning difficulties, achievement is good. Parents and carers are thrilled with the progress their children make. One said of her son, 'He works much harder than I did when I was at school and I am so pleased at what he can do.' All pupils do well against the learning targets set for them, which are very effectively moderated to accurately reflect their real capabilities. This adds strength to the judgement that pupils make good progress, and for each of the last two years, progress for those between Years 9 and 11 has been better than expected nationally for the same-aged pupils in equivalent schools. Pupils make an outstanding start in the Foundation Stage in each of the early learning areas. This is not sustained when they enter the main school because of limitations in the accommodation. As a result, over all the years, irrespective of the cause or severity of their learning difficulties, they make good progress in all subjects so that when they leave school, or move into the sixth form, they do so with accredited awards that appropriately reflect the extent of their learning. Last year, they showed the breadth of their achievement through passes on units of the Assessment and Qualification Authority (AQA) award, the National Skills Profile (NSP), Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) and the ASDAN Bronze award.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Parents and carers are especially pleased with the excellent progress their children make in their social skills and towards becoming as independent as possible. They readily talk about how improvement, for example, in eating skills, has changed family life because now they are able to take their children out to eat. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted extremely well by the curriculum and this raises pupils' awareness of local facilities and other cultures. For example, when the pupil who produced a computer presentation of 'Bollywood' sang in her first language, she delighted pupils and staff alike.

Enjoyment of school is seen through regular attendance and in the enthusiastic way in which pupils take part in lessons and other activities, such as the lunchtime clubs. They gain in confidence and, as they communicate better, begin to show their real personalities. The outstanding relationships they develop with staff make them adventurous learners. They readily use the interactive whiteboards and enjoy using new approaches and new equipment to help in their learning. They are encouraged to think about healthy lifestyles and at lunchtime are given appropriate food choices. They do not experience a wide range of physical activities because of issues to do with the accommodation, but they do know the importance of being active as part of a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils learn about the economics of the adult world by taking part in the mini-enterprise scheme, and the student council gives a good awareness of the process of government.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good because teachers plan lessons that meet pupils' learning needs. They, and their support assistants, know the pupils very well and through the very good use of signs, symbols and pictures ensure that they understand their tasks and complete them to the best of their capabilities. Interactive whiteboards are used exceptionally well to provide clear objectives for learning and to make learning interesting through colour, movement and sound. For example, in one lesson, because of the innovative and exciting way the rocket's journey was tracked, younger pupils understood the difficulty of landing a rocket on the moon when it is a moving target always circling the earth. Other electronic equipment, including a wide range of special switches and speech machines, is used equivalently well in ensuring that all pupils, despite the severity of their difficulties, take a full part in the lessons. Pupils are comfortable as learners and in the Foundation Stage quickly learn the routines and expectations for

learning. They continue these throughout the school and apply themselves very well to their work.

Classrooms are presented well with good displays celebrating learning. However, except in the Foundation Stage, too many limit the impact of teaching because their small size and awkward shapes restrict what can be taught and how teaching can proceed. In these classrooms, all the specialist skills of teachers, especially those to do with teaching according to the procedures of the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH), are not able to be used to benefit learning and progress is affected by this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum for Foundation Stage children is excellent and provides high quality opportunities for learning and, at the same time, for assessing their capabilities. It is good for pupils in Years 1 to 11 and in the sixth form. It broadly meets all national requirements and subject leaders have been very effective in adapting their subjects to match the needs of all pupils and in providing specialist resources to help teaching. However, even given the high quality of their work, because of the inadequacies of the accommodation it is difficult to present all parts of some subjects, including science and physical education, safely and well.

The curriculum is effective in a number of ways. Most of the pupils take part in the good range of lunchtime clubs. However, the absence of specialist rooms detracts from what might be offered; for example, the choir club has to meet in the food studies room. Regular visits to many local facilities provide important opportunities to practise emerging social skills and to support classroom learning. Visitors to the school, from the police to theatre groups, and those from many different cultures and beliefs add richness and colour to pupils' learning. A small number of pupils benefit from visits to mainstream schools, which are very well planned to promote personal and social development. The outreach provision, which provides support for pupils and teachers in mainstream schools, is well respected and growing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school pays great attention to the safety and security of pupils. Risk procedures operate very effectively for all areas of health and safety, but especially for medical care and the management of behaviour. Procedures for child protection are excellent and recruitment procedures are equally rigorous. Parents say that their children are extremely well cared for at school, one saying that she knows her daughter feels safe at school because 'she wants to go every day of the week and holidays too.'

Learning is supported very well through the targets set in each subject for each pupil. Staff use these to plan lessons and guide pupils so that all gain equivalently good access to their tasks and make equivalent progress against their targets. Personal and social skills develop outstandingly well because of precise targets and the skills and patience of the staff, who guide pupils towards them. Promoting eating skills is a good example. Lunchtime supervisors take great pride in helping their pupils become independent eaters. They sit in front of their pupils, know exactly what their role is because they have been trained so well, expect their pupils to work hard at feeding themselves and do not take the easy option of doing it for them.

Statutory requirements relating to statements of special educational needs are met in full. The work of a wide range of specialists, including speech and language, physio- and occupational therapists, and those to do with career choices, contributes significantly to meeting pupils' additional needs in full.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management overall are outstanding. The headteacher is supported very well by an outstanding deputy headteacher and others, such as the assistant headteacher and the subject leaders, who are all very effective in ensuring that good achievement is the norm, despite the significant accommodation problems. The headteacher has the highest of aspirations for the school and these are shared by all staff. As a result, the school is calm and organised and is a place where pupils and staff are able to flourish because the procedures set by the headteacher are very effectively monitored by senior leaders and ensure that pupils and staff are routinely able to do their best. There are many examples to support this; but those for the continuing development of staff are especially outstanding and make a significant contribution to the outstanding levels of care and support offered to each pupil throughout the school and to each pupil's good achievement across the full range of subjects.

Pupils' progress is recorded well and this information is used very effectively in planning lessons to meet the needs of all pupils and in reporting gains, for example, at annual reviews and in annual reports to parents and carers. Senior leaders recognise fully that it is not being used well enough in judging the overall effectiveness of the school.

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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?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

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	1	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

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?	1	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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
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	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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 impressed with your school and think that, while it provides you with a good education overall, some parts are outstanding. These include:

- The way you develop as young people, the excellent way you behave, the way you work very hard to do your best and your good achievement.
- The way the staff look after you. They like you very much, and they make sure that you are safe and comfortable at school.
- The headteacher is passionate about giving you all the opportunities you need to be as good as you can be. She is supported exceedingly well by the senior leaders and all the staff and that is why the school is such a calm and happy place.

There is only one thing that we would like improved:

- We would like the senior leaders to make better use of the information they gain on how well you are doing to say how good the school really is.

Finally, we think that the building affects how well you do in your lessons and because of this we would normally ask for it to be improved. But, we are not going to do this because we know that you will be moving shortly into a quite outstanding new building that will not interfere at all with how well you can do. We are excited for you.