



# Culverhill School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 131808  
**Local Authority** South Gloucestershire  
**Inspection number** 293854  
**Inspection date** 13 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Sarah Mascall

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Kelston Close
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Yate
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7-16		Bristol BS37 8SZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01454 866930
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	132	<b>Fax number</b>	01454 866931
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Keith Lawrence
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Culverhill is a school for pupils with complex needs. All have moderate learning difficulties, and many have additional special needs. These include emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Because of these difficulties, when pupils start school their attainment is well below national expectations. All pupils have statements of special educational need.

Most pupils are from the local area and the vast majority are White British. Their socio-economic backgrounds are mixed. Nearly a third are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. There are a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Culverhill is a good school. It has a number of strengths, many of which result from the drive and commitment of the headteacher. With the support of her leadership team she has ensured that good improvements have been made over the last three years. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development because senior staff have started to make effective use of the information they have about pupils' progress. For example, the school has recognised subjects where pupils are not doing well enough and has taken effective action. This is particularly the case in literacy where pupils' progress in the last academic year, whilst satisfactory, was not as good as it should have been. To improve, this a number of strategies have been put in place, although these have yet to have a clear impact on learning.

Understandably, standards are well below the national average but pupils' achievements are good overall because they benefit from good teaching. Pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics and science. Teachers work very effectively with their assistants to ensure that pupils are well supported and are able to complete their work. Targets set for pupils to improve, though, are not sufficiently challenging, and because of this, teachers do not always set tasks to match the different abilities in their class.

Pupils clearly like school and attend well. This is because the activities offered within the curriculum are good. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, they are outstanding and ensure that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. The very good links with outside agencies support pupils very well. Care, guidance and support are good overall and are a strength of the school, ensuring that pupils make good progress in their personal development. Many parents are pleased with the progress their children have made in developing their social skills. One commented that her son's confidence "had gone through the roof" since starting at Culverhill. Pupils work and play well together and behaviour is good. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are generally dealt with well, but the behaviour of a small number of the oldest pupils is not always dealt with effectively. This has resulted in an unsatisfactory recent increase in the number of temporary exclusions. Pupils say they feel safe and that, although there is a small amount of bullying in school, they know who to go to, and they consider adults deal with it well.

Leadership and management are good and have empowered staff to take on their roles and responsibilities effectively. This is very evident amongst subject leaders, who work hard to ensure that their subjects are developed well. There are particularly good arrangements to develop staff skills and good use is made of teachers' expertise in sharing good practice amongst all staff.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all pupils make the best possible progress in developing their skills in literacy.
- Make sure that targets set for pupils are challenging and teachers use these more effectively to ensure work meets the needs of all pupils.

- Develop more effective strategies to deal with difficult behaviour in order to reduce the number of temporary exclusions.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Although, because of their special needs, pupils' standards are well below those expected nationally, their achievements are good. Pupils get off to a good start in the primary department. This is because, although many have communication difficulties when they start, the good focus on developing their skills enables them to develop their ways of communicating well. Progress in mathematics and science is good across the school and this is reflected in the successes pupils have in passing examinations, including GCSE in mathematics. Achievements in literacy are satisfactory. Whilst pupils make generally good progress in their speaking and listening skills considering their low starting points, progress in reading and writing is not as good as it should be. The school has also recognised this and a good start has been made to address these weaknesses.

Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 because they have very good opportunities to have their successes recognised through accredited courses. Several take entry-level courses in a year rather than the expected two years, achieving passes in subjects such as drama.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others. This is very evident in the work they do to support charities and through their links with a school in Gambia. In assemblies, pupils are keen to celebrate their own and others' achievements, both academic and social. Pupils contribute well to the community. The school council are involved in decision-making processes such as interviewing staff, and they have met with the school cook to bring about improvements in school dinners. They are very aware of the need to keep healthy, particularly in staying fit, showing real enthusiasm for sporting activities. Pupils gain excellent experiences in business skills through mini-enterprise projects and are very well prepared for life when they leave school.

Pupils value the process for recording their behaviour and attitudes in lessons, and have responded well to this. This has enabled many to improve their behaviour in class and overall behaviour has been much improved over the last year. However, over recent months there have been several incidents involving older pupils that have resulted in an increase in temporary exclusions.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teamwork between teachers and their assistants is very good and contributes greatly to pupils' good progress. Lessons, particularly in subjects such as science, are planned well and include a good range of different activities that hold pupils' interest. There is good practice in school in making it clear to pupils what they will learn in each lesson but there is not yet a consistent approach to the way this is presented to pupils. Praise is used well both verbally and in the marking of pupils' work and staff make good use of the "assertive discipline" folders to reward pupils for their good attitudes and behaviour. In lessons such as mathematics, work is matched well to pupils' different abilities. This is not consistent in all subjects and because the targets set for pupils are not always challenging enough, not all teachers ensure that the work is hard enough for all pupils.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school is continually looking at ways to improve its curriculum. It has been particularly successful in developing an excellent range of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In many of these activities they can gain awards for their work. The range of this accreditation is very good and designed to meet the needs of all pupils. The enterprise scheme is very well planned and enables pupils to build on their skills and prepares them exceptionally well for life at work.

Improvements to the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 9 are beginning to have an impact. A good start has been made on developing pupils' literacy skills each morning, and the introduction of initiatives linked to pupils' emotional literacy is supporting this further. The school has recognised the need to improve pupils' literacy skills in all subjects, particularly in writing. Drama is used particularly well to improve pupils' confidence and communication skills. It is also used very effectively in preparing pupils in their move from Year 9 to Year 10 through role play and other activities. There is a good range of activities that support the curriculum and pupils enjoy the different clubs that are on offer.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The care of pupils is given a high priority and good systems are in place to ensure pupils are kept safe. Child protection procedures and arrangements for vetting staff are well established and understood by staff. Parents are positive about the support they and their children receive from the school. A key element of this is the very good links with other agencies that enable them to ensure that all pupils are well looked after.

The guidance and support for pupils' academic progress are satisfactory rather than good. This is because the process for setting targets is not robust enough and does not always ensure that pupils' targets in their individual education plans are effective. Targets are too broad and are not sufficiently well focused on enabling pupils to make the best possible progress. The involvement of pupils in setting their targets is fairly new and, as a result, not all pupils are sure of their targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is keen to provide the best for its pupils and there is a real sense of commitment from staff to make improvements. The school is well placed to do this and has a good capacity to improve. It has developed a good understanding of how to use the information it has on pupils to bring about improvements in their progress and teaching. This, together with the robust systems for checking on many aspects of the school's work, means that there is a good understanding about its strengths and weaknesses. Senior staff are quick to take action to make changes to bring about improvements and there is good involvement of subject co-ordinators in developing their subjects.

Governors know the school well and have effective systems for checking on the work of the school. They have developed good links with staff and parents. However, whilst most parents feel they are involved in their pupils' work through homework, not all feel well informed about what goes on in school.

The professional development of staff is a strength of the school. For example, a new initiative to use staff expertise in specific aspects to train other staff is beginning to ensure everyone works in the same way. Examples include staff taking an active role in the emotional literacy project, wearing badges to show that they are conscious of how they talk to each other and to pupils and so providing very good role models to pupils.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

Thank you very much for your time in talking to Bob and myself and showing us your work. We very much enjoyed seeing your school and were impressed by how well you get on together.

Your school is a good school. It is well led by the headteacher and her senior staff. They work hard to make sure things keep getting better for you. Because of this, you achieve well and teaching is good. You do especially well in maths and science. Teachers know that you could do better in improving your literacy skills and have already started work on this. You make good progress in your personal development and a lot of your parents said how confident you had become since starting at Culverhill. You told us you like school and feel involved. The school council has done well in making changes to the school. The behaviour of most of you is good but a small number of the older pupils are not behaving as well as they should and because of this, too many pupils are being excluded for a short while from school.

The school makes sure you study all the subjects you should and pupils in Years 10 and 11 experience an excellent range of activities that prepares them well for when they leave school. The school has good systems for making sure you are well cared for and it is particularly good at working with lots of different agencies to do this. Senior teachers know that the targets you are set to help you do better are not very good. By improving these targets teachers will be able to make sure the work they give you is matched to what you can do and help you do even better in your work.

To make the school even better we have asked the school to do three things:-

- Make sure you make the best possible progress in developing your skills in literacy.
- Set better targets to help you learn more so that teachers can use these more effectively to ensure work meets the needs of all pupils.
- Make sure that those pupils who are struggling to behave appropriately get enough support so that they do not miss any school.

Finally, you can do your bit by remembering your targets so that you can check if you are learning all the things you should.

We wish you well for the future.