

Braidwood School for The Deaf

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103611
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308360
Inspection date	16 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	61
6th form	3
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Newham
Headteacher	Karen Saywood
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Bromford Road Birmingham B36 8AF
Telephone number	01214 645558
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on achievement; the quality of the curriculum and procedures for care, guidance and support in supporting pupils' personal development; and the effectiveness of leadership and management in understanding the school's strengths and weaknesses. The inspection also considered the effectiveness of post-16 provision. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, school documentation and assessment information. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not, in many respects, justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Braidwood School has been located on the same site as a mainstream school since 2003. It caters for pupils with hearing impairment who can access the curriculum through the use of sign and spoken English. Many of the pupils have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorders and moderate learning difficulties. A small number have emotional and social difficulties. Just over a third of pupils are White British and a third are from Pakistani backgrounds. About a sixth of pupils are from Black British backgrounds. There are a small number of pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds for whom English is a second language. Most pupils have British sign language (BSL) as their first language.

The post-16 provision caters for a very small number of pupils, who because of additional needs, require further support before attending college full time. Pupils attend college one day a week and the British Institute for the Deaf (BID) four days a week and are supported by staff from Braidwood in both locations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has been through a period of turmoil over the last three years but through the determination of the headteacher, many of its strengths are maintained. Braidwood School provides a good education for its pupils. The move to the mainstream site led to a very unsettled period. There was a noticeable deterioration in pupils' behaviour and staff took time to adjust to the new setting. The headteacher has effectively addressed the behaviour issues and brought staff together so that all are committed to developing provision. The strong links with the mainstream school are having a very positive impact on the school's provision. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good opportunities to attend a wide range of courses in the mainstream school and at Braidwood. As a result they are well prepared for college and the world of work. The school is looking to develop further links with the mainstream school to enable younger pupils to have access to a wider range of courses. Pupils talk very positively about the opportunities to mix with hearing children over lunch and break times. They like having hearing friends and because many of the mainstream pupils learn to sign, they can communicate with them.

The school is committed to enabling pupils to become as independent as possible so that they are well prepared for the next stage of education. It is successful in this because the effective procedures for pupils' care and welfare enable pupils to make good progress in their personal development. All staff focus well on encouraging pupils to have confidence in themselves and as a result, by the time they leave school, pupils are sensible, mature, young adults who have a real sense of self-worth. This is confirmed by parents, one of whom wrote, 'Since attending Braidwood School my child has developed a positive self esteem. He is proud to be deaf and is happy.'

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school. They like many aspects of it and could not, when asked think of anything they would change. There are many opportunities for them to take on responsibilities and they talk proudly about supporting each other and helping younger pupils, for example, to improve their reading. They show real care and concern for each other and there is a happy and cheerful atmosphere in the school. Pupils' trust in staff is a credit to the school and pupils say they feel safe. They comment that they can go to their mentors or any member of staff to talk over problems at school or home.

Pupils consider one of the best things about Braidwood is the progress they make in their learning and they comment on how much they enjoy all lessons. This is because teaching is good and as a result, pupils' achievements are good. Staff are effective communicators and work well with pupils to encourage them to improve their communication skills. Achievement in English is good and this is very evident in the progress pupils make in improving their writing skills. Pupils' work progresses from a very limited understanding of sentence structure and vocabulary at the start of Year 7 to, detailed written pieces of work in English by the time they reach Years 10 and 11. Pupils make very good progress in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and although progress slows slightly in Years 10 and 11, progress in mathematics is good overall. Pupils' good achievement is reflected in the range of accreditation they gain by the end of Year 11. All leave with passes in GCSEs and Entry Level accreditation. Pupils also take BTEC courses, and in media, for example, gain good passes. Achievement in art last year was particularly good with over half the pupils gaining passes of C or above. Overall, standards are below average.

Pupils benefit from enthusiastic and animated teaching that is characteristic of most lessons. Many teachers focus well on the skills they want pupils to gain during the lesson. Pupils like the recent introduction of targets for learning which they feel have helped them to understand what they need to do next to improve. They speak positively about this new initiative and most know their own targets. Although there is some good practice, these targets are not yet routinely used in planning. As a result there are occasions when work does not fully match the wide range of needs in each class. There are good examples, particularly in English, of detailed marking that provides pupils with suggestions of what they need to do next to improve their work.

Effective leadership and management have enabled the school to act quickly to address areas of weakness. This is evident in the improvements to behaviour management and the newly established systems for recording and collating pupils' achievements. Although there has at times been too much reliance on the headteacher to drive forward improvements, other senior managers are now increasingly involved and work well together to bring about change. This is evident for example in the recent work in monitoring the effectiveness of literacy across the curriculum. The school has a good understanding of its overall effectiveness, informed by a wide range of informal monitoring processes. However at times these lack rigour and there has not always been sufficient focus on fully analysing information and identifying precisely where improvement is necessary. As a result, governors and other interested parties do not have the information they need to provide sufficient challenge and ensure they have a clear understanding, and thus greater ownership, of the school's educational direction.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, with a new curriculum recently established to support the needs of the small number of pupils who stay on into the sixth form. It effectively combines an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network course with a BTEC course in life skills. Informal feedback from providers and discussions with pupils portrays provision as satisfactory with some good elements. Its strength lies in its focus on preparing pupils for college life and the world of work. As a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development. They are gradually developing the confidence they need for the next stage of their education. Pupils make satisfactory progress on both courses and informal assessments by staff confirm this.

The head of post-16 has developed close links with the colleges and this has enabled the establishment of new courses in a short space of time. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there are appropriate plans in place to develop systems for monitoring and supporting the progress of pupils and ensuring that the school has an effective overview of the work being undertaken.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that information gathered from monitoring is routinely analysed so that there is greater consistency in precisely identifying improvements needed.
- Ensure that targets for pupils are used consistently in planning, to match work to pupils' abilities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
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	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- Thank you for making me so welcome, talking to me and helping me during the inspection. I especially enjoyed the discussions I had with you during the day. As you rightly told me, your school is doing a good job and is ensuring you make good progress in your learning. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.
- The school is successful in developing your confidence and preparing you for life when you leave school.
- You feel safe in school and know that there are people you can talk to when you have concerns.
- You make good progress in English and mathematics and pass a good range of examinations.
- You do well in learning to communicate with people.
- Your teachers make lessons interesting and you enjoy going to school.
- You like the new targets you have and feel they are helpful.
- You enjoy the opportunities to mix with hearing people especially at lunch and break times.
- The headteacher has worked hard to improve things in school and is well supported by senior staff.
- Your school's sixth form is satisfactory, with some new developments that are giving pupils wider opportunities in their learning.

To improve further we believe the school should now:

- make better use of the information it has to help identify the things that need improving
- make better use of your targets for learning so that the work you do in class is always matched closely to your ability.

I wish you well for the future and hope you will continue to be fully involved in developing the school.

17 April 2008



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Braidwood School for the Deaf, Birmingham, B36 8AF

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I wish you well for the future and hope you will continue to be fully involved in developing the school.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall
Lead inspector