

# Skilts School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103617
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308364
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones HMI

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 category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	62
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Griffiths
<b>Headteacher</b>	Charles Herriotts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Gorcott Hill Redditch B98 9ET
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 853851
<b>Fax number</b>	01527 857949

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<b>Age group</b>	5–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

## Description of the school

Skilts is a residential special school for boys who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It offers day and part-time boarding provision. Currently, half the pupils use the residential facilities as part of their school week. An increasing number of boys, over half, are admitted with more complex medical conditions, such as autistic spectrum disorder, than was the case at the previous inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average because of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities and gaps in their education. Most of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, and 40% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has achieved a number of awards including Investor in People and the Healthy Schools award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly and has a good capacity to improve further. Pupils are happy, enthusiastic and eager to participate. The school does well to create a haven where pupils can enjoy themselves and learn, and the outstanding residential provision plays a full part. Pupils are keen to say that they feel safe in school, and are very well looked after. Parents agree, and typical comments include 'its like one big family' and 'the school makes the boys feel like members of a community'.

Personal development is good. Pupils behave well as a result of consistently applied behaviour management techniques and the high standard of care pupils receive from all members of staff. Pupils are tolerant of each other and there is a harmonious ethos. There are a few instances of bullying, but pupils regard these incidents as being dealt with well by staff. Pupils lead healthy lives and grow in confidence and self-esteem during their time in the school.

Progress across the school is satisfactory; although standards in tests are well below average because of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and the disrupted experience of education many of them have had. Systems are in place to monitor pupils' achievement. However, this is difficult because pupils join the school at different times and assessment is not always secure. Teachers ensure a calm and orderly working atmosphere in their classes. This is due to the very good relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils are keen to work and to do their best. There are strengths in teaching, particularly in the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and good classroom organisation. However, teachers do not always provide a wide enough range of work for the different abilities in their classes. The outstanding methods of some teachers in the use of drama techniques and high quality planning are not sufficiently shared across the whole staff. The curriculum is innovative and meets the needs of the pupils well. Good emphasis is placed on helping pupils to read and write and use numbers, and all pupils have a basic skills session every day. The curriculum is complemented by a wide range of creative, sporting and enrichment activities that help pupils to make up for some of the experiences they have missed in their previous education.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who has established a strong and supportive management team. The head of care is an integral and equal member of this team. Considerable change and improvement has shifted the school's focus onto raising standards and achievement, as well as delivering the highest possible levels of care.

## Effectiveness of boarding provision

### Grade: 1

The quality of the residential provision was found to be outstanding in the last Ofsted inspection in March 2008. All the National Minimum Standards are met. An established team helps to ensure that children are guided and supported through their early education and residential experience. It has created a homely, happy environment where children feel safe and relaxed. Provision is consistently excellent, in terms of recording systems and the care given to children. The two minor recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met despite the short time period between the last care inspection and this whole school inspection.

The residential provision actively supports pupils' achievements. Links between the experiences of resident and non-resident boys are very good because of the house system, where all the boys begin the school day and eat their lunches in their respective houses together. There are

good curricular links between the residential provision and the school, for example joint work to prevent bullying and book bags to encourage regular reading. Through their house meetings and the school council, the boys play an active part in the school community and feel that their opinions are taken into account.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- 
- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that teachers always provide a range of work to meet the varying abilities of pupils in their classes.
- Share best practice to improve the quality of teaching.
- Improve the accuracy of assessment data and its use in tracking pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory across the core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and ICT, where pupils make steady progress from very low starting points. Satisfactory teaching enables pupils to make similar rates of progress across other subjects, although this is not tracked as well. Baseline assessment, carried out when pupils enter the school, means that realistic targets are set for pupils' progress in academic subjects and personal development. Pupils are making good progress in reading and developing basic skills in ICT because of a whole school approach. The pupils who have additional learning needs have increased their progress following effective individual intervention to help their literacy and numeracy skills. The school analyses the results of different groups of pupils over time and has found that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils behave well because of the behaviour management approaches implemented by the staff and there have been no exclusions this year. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to participate and learn. They appreciate what the school is doing to help them, and in turn are sometimes able to support each other. Attendance is satisfactory when measured against national norms but this represents an enormous improvement for some pupils who were previously school refusers. Pupils feel safe around school and know who to go to for help. They say that bullying is taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and all go swimming every week. Through house meetings and the school council pupils feel their views are listened to and they have a part to play in running the school community. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good because they are given opportunities to explore the world and their own identities. For example, pupils have made video clips of themselves talking about things that are precious to them, and through the work of a visiting artist they have been exploring the concept of homes and housing. Preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory but pupils are not involved in many enterprising or financial activities, and this area could be developed further.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers manage behaviour well through positive reinforcement with very effective use of praise and encouragement. Teaching assistants provide skilled and effective support for pupils' learning. However, the assessment of individual needs is not always accurate or sufficiently well used in lesson planning. This means that pupils are not always set tasks in line with their particular abilities, and those of higher ability are not sufficiently challenged. The accuracy of assessment is improving but comparison of levels with other schools has yet to take place. Occasionally, lesson activities are too long for the concentration spans of the pupils and there is a lack of opportunity for independent learning. Teachers use ICT very effectively to engage and involve pupils in their learning. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 numeracy lesson, video clips of the pupils themselves learning in a previous lesson were used to focus attention, and older pupils enjoy entering comments on the school's intranet. Some outstanding practice in terms of high quality planning and the use of drama techniques is not yet being used to improve the teaching in all classes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school has recently introduced a themed curriculum which allows pupils to work on topics such as minibeasts instead of separate subjects. This, combined with the creative partnership with local artists, means that pupils have a rich and exciting diet of a range of activities which, where it works well, help them to express and channel their emotions, and develop their self-esteem and learning skills. Assessment processes, to track the progress pupils make within the themed curriculum, are still being refined.

Social occasions, such as lunchtime, are used well for pupils to watch role models and practise their manners and good behaviour skills. There is an excellent range of out-of-school activities which complement the themed curriculum, develop social skills, and help to keep pupils fit and healthy. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made in establishing ICT across the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are still being developed.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school has very thorough systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure. First aid and medical care are very good. Pastoral support is particularly strong. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to, should they be upset. The welfare of pupils is supported by all staff and governors who have been trained in the safeguarding of children, and additional training has been completed by staff taking a lead in this area. All relevant policies are in place. The recruitment practices completed for staff working full time within the school are all rigorous. An effective multi-agency group, with staff from the school, health professionals and representatives from education and welfare services, meets regularly to draw together concerns about pupils and do their best to access specialist interventions for pupils who need them. Academic tracking has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are now well aware of their targets and they know what to do to improve their work. The monitoring of behaviour

and social skills is very good and pupils are able to talk fluently about the progress they have made in improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has built a very strong senior leadership team, which in turn has helped to create a school with high expectations where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. Subject coordinators are developing good skills and experience. The staff have been involved in a restructuring of the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school through subject reviews. These processes are now robust and challenging. The quality of teaching is monitored accurately by the school and support given to weaker teachers. All staff have had input into the school development plan, which sets out very clearly what is expected of each member of the team. This has had a marked impact on the input individuals make to whole school issues. Performance management targets for teachers are now linked to the school development plan and next year they will be linked to pupils' progress. The governing body has sharpened its approach to monitoring school performance since the previous inspection. Governors now have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are beginning to challenge and hold the school to account. Finances are managed well and the school has achieved the Financial Management Standard. The school does not fulfil statutory requirements in one aspect of equality legislation because no assessment has been done of the impact of the school's race equality policy.

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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
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

<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.

## Annex A

**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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Skilts School, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 9ET

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school on 2–3 July 2008. I enjoyed talking with you. You told me how much you enjoy being at Skilts School. It is a satisfactory school and is improving all the time. I thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how I thought it could get even better.

- You enjoy your lessons and try to do your best; you behave well, and are proud of the work you do.
- You know how to keep healthy by eating the right food and taking exercise.
- You enjoy the excellent range of trips, sporting and arts activities provided for you.
- You told me that you feel safe in school and are well looked after; you all enjoy eating your meals in your houses, and those of you who sometimes stay overnight say you really like it.
- There is good guidance and support for those who need it.
- The school is well led by the headteacher and there is a good team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- Things I thought could be improved.
- You could do better work in your subjects, and especially in English and mathematics, if your teachers could make sure the tasks they set are suitable for your different levels of ability.
- Teachers could share their ideas together more.
- Teachers could compare the work you do with work from other schools to keep a good check on the progress you are making.

I wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones HMI