

# Battledown Centre for Children and Families

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115828
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312071
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Barter

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>	2-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	34
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Cummins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harp Hill Battledown Cheltenham GL52 6PZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 525472
<b>Fax number</b>	01242 257557

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

### Description of the school

Children attend school for half- or whole-day sessions depending on their age and need. A very small number stay at the school until the age of six if they are not ready to transfer to another school by the time they are five years old. Nearly all children are of White British heritage and come from English speaking homes. Children attending the school have a range of more severe and complex needs than those seen at the previous inspection. They include severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and physical disability. When they join the school, children's development is significantly delayed compared with others of a similar age.

Battledown Centre has a recently updated Operational Brief. The local authority has commissioned it to play a lead role in developing Early Years Special Needs provision, including extended provision and services to children aged 0-2, and their families. The school has received a number of awards in recognition of its work, achieving the Early Years Quality Assurance Award (Bristol Standard) in November 2007.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The children's education gets off to a superb start in this outstanding school. The school is a vibrant and caring place in which children grow in confidence. It is easy to see why parents are delighted with Battledown. Their comments such as, 'All staff are extremely kind, helpful and supportive' and, 'Families are made to feel welcome and part of the team' give a flavour of why children blossom so well.

Children's considerable enjoyment stems principally from the enthusiasm and expertise of the staff team. Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists know children and their families very well and create a supportive atmosphere in which children feel extremely secure. The school leaves no stone unturned in its efforts to safeguard pupils and to meet their personal and physical needs. As a result, parents have great confidence in the care provided for their children, typically commenting that 'they love it here and bounce into school each day, happy and raring to go!'

The driving factors in children's success are the consistently high quality teaching and the exciting curriculum, which encourage children to learn rapidly, greatly enjoy new experiences and develop personal skills quickly. As a result, children make extremely good progress in a very short time, no matter what their difficulty. Progress is especially rapid in children's personal, social and emotional development, in their physical skills and in learning to communicate with others. This is because teachers provide frequent, practical opportunities for children to develop their skills in lessons, outdoors, and at lunchtime. Children's behaviour is excellent because they receive consistent guidance and positive praise. They become very confident learners, ready to take on challenges such as going up a ladder on a climbing frame, making muddy handprint patterns on paper and responding to their names by signing 'hello'. While children do not approach the goals expected for their age because of the nature of their difficulties, their outstanding individual achievement prepares them very effectively for integration into mainstream or special school.

This remarkable school, recognised through an award for the quality of its Early Years work, is the product of first-rate leadership and management. Partnerships with schools, health professionals and therapists are extremely strong and make a considerable contribution to children's learning and personal development. Parents report that links with them are outstanding and that their views are highly valued and listened to through opportunities such as the 'Infocus' group and at regular parents evenings. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all elements of the school helps leaders to identify what is working well and where improvement is possible. They know that established assessment procedures effectively monitor the progress of children traditionally served by the school but these systems are not flexible enough to assess children's increasingly complex needs. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have managed change in the school's remit extremely effectively, while having a clear vision and plan for the future development of its extended services. It has outstanding capacity to make continued improvement in all aspects of its work.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

As the school provides the Foundation Stage curriculum for all children, including the few who are aged over five years, this is reported in the 'Overall Effectiveness' section of the report and the sub-sections below.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the procedures for assessing children's progress to take account of their increasingly complex, individual needs.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Although children's development is significantly delayed compared with others of their age, they achieve exceptionally well against their individual targets. Children with different disabilities and difficulties achieve equally well because of teachers' very good knowledge of their individual needs. Children's personal, social and emotional skills improve particularly well and they make rapid gains in developing awareness of others, self-confidence and independence. Children's physical skills also develop very well. They learn to stand, to climb steps and to ride trikes. Their communication skills, through speech, signing and use of symbols, improve markedly, enabling them to sign 'goodbye', sing simple rhymes and, for some, speak in whole sentences. Children also make extremely good progress in their creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world because they are given many opportunities to learn and explore. Children's mathematical development, although hampered by some language and comprehension difficulties, is good. They sing number rhymes enthusiastically and some are able to match different shapes and colours.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Children are very happy at school, attend well and participate with great eagerness in all their activities. Their pleasure in jumping and crawling in the hall, happy singing of well-known rhymes and intent exploring in the outdoor 'forest' are only a few examples of children's excellent attitudes to learning. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and contributes greatly to their learning. They respond very well to gentle reminders about good sitting, listening and looking, which encourages their full participation in groups. Children's developing personal and social skills, such as taking turns and sharing with others, make an exceptionally strong contribution to the happy school environment and to their lives in the community. Children hugely enjoy new experiences, which help them to develop exceptionally well an understanding of how to lead a healthy and safe life. They learn to try new tastes while cooking and to choose healthy foods, such as fruit, milk and water. Children love being in the fresh air and relish opportunities to play outside and to explore leaves, plants and mud in the Forest School setting. In every respect, children are extremely well equipped to meet the challenges of the next stage in their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teachers have expert knowledge of how young children learn and provide lessons which inspire and challenge them to progress in all areas of their learning. They plan a wealth of opportunities for children to develop their confidence, build on their learning and discover the wonders of the world. Staff teamwork is exceptional with teaching assistants and therapists making a huge contribution to children's learning and personal development. All staff are committed to helping children to develop enjoyment and independence in their learning. They promote communication, through signing and symbols, at every opportunity to help children understand what is expected and to express themselves. Staff are skilled at observing and recording children's individual progress. Photographic 'learning journeys' are used very effectively to record children's achievements and to assess their progress. Teachers understand the importance of accurate assessment and use established procedures consistently. These are not yet sufficiently refined to assess some aspects of progress of the children with very complex needs.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

A significant feature of the outstanding curriculum is the way in which it is adapted very carefully to give children plenty of opportunities for learning through play and exploration. Teachers are skilled at adapting activities to reflect the wide range of abilities and achievements of children in their class. They consistently provide work which meets the needs and targets of each child as identified in their individual education plan. There is a clear and highly relevant focus on communication and the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills throughout all of their activities. Children's physical skills are enhanced significantly through therapy programmes and the use of community facilities, such as horse riding and the Forest School. Exciting enrichment activities enhance learning and personal development exceptionally well. Residential visits, for example, are greatly appreciated by parents for the contribution they make to their children's developing independence.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Children receive the highest quality pastoral care and academic support and guidance because staff have an enormous commitment to understanding and providing for their needs. The arrangements to ensure children's safety, health and well-being are meticulous. Staff training in child protection issues is thorough and frequent. All staff, including therapists and teaching assistants, work together as a team to ensure every child's needs, as identified in their individual education plans, are met fully. They treat children with the utmost respect. Relationships are outstanding and this means that children have every confidence to communicate with adults and make their wishes known. While adults know the children extremely well and are able to anticipate their difficulties, they always give them time to communicate, express a choice and let staff know if they are unhappy. Procedures to integrate children into mainstream and special schools are outstanding. Time is taken to introduce children to their new setting and they are supported to achieve this with success.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leaders show excellent vision and have extremely high expectations for the school and its children. These are communicated successfully to all staff, who work with great commitment and enthusiasm to provide a high quality service to children and their families. A full programme of activities to monitor each aspect of the school provides a very accurate picture of strengths and areas where minor improvement is possible. The school already knows that it needs to adjust its assessment procedures to meet children's increasingly complex needs. All staff with leadership roles, including teaching assistants, contribute fully to plans for moving the school forward. The skills of staff are used exceptionally well to further developments, for example, in the school's work to provide pre-school provision for children under the age of two. Governors are extremely committed to the school and fulfil their responsibilities well, such as understanding the need to monitor the impact of their decision to fund additional speech therapy provision. Parents have the utmost confidence in the school and are full of praise for its impact on their children. A number say that they 'cannot fault' Battledown for the education it provides.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit you at Battledown not long ago. It was lovely to meet you and all the adults and to see how well you are doing. Your families said that your school is fantastic and I agree with them!

These are some of the really good things about it.

- You all learn extremely well right from the time you start to when you go to your next school.
- You are growing up to be very happy and sensible children. You enjoy school a great deal, I know, because I could see your smiling faces.
- Your teachers know just what to do to make you learn. All the adults work very hard together to help you do as well as you can.
- You have lots of interesting and fun things to do when you play which help you to learn. I know how much you like going outside, singing songs and running and jumping in the hall. I saw some lovely photographs of you making some cakes!
- Everyone cares about you very much and looks after you as well as they can. This makes you feel happy at school.
- All the adults are working hard all of the time to make Battledown an even better place to be.

There are not a lot of big things that need to be done to make your school even better but I have asked the teachers to find out ways of checking just a little bit more on some of you who have some extra problems. I know they can do that!