

Bennerley Fields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113037
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325743
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Charlie Henry HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	77
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Glennice Birkin
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Stirling
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stratford Street Ilkeston Derbyshire DE7 8QZ
Telephone number	01159326374
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Bennerley Fields provides education for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Since the last inspection an increasing proportion of pupils have additional speech and communication difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). A few pupils also have additional needs resulting in hearing and visual difficulties, and physical disability. All pupils in the main school and some children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a statement of special educational needs; some of these children are undergoing statutory assessment. There are substantially more boys than girls in the school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds; far fewer pupils than the national average are from minority ethnic groups and homes where English is not the main spoken language. A larger-than-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. All children have attainment on entry to school which is well below that expected for their age. Pupils attend from a wide geographical area of Derbyshire.

There are 19 children who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As in the main part of the school, there has been a trend for these children to have more complex learning needs, especially relating to communication difficulties. On leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage, some children enter the main school; others go to local mainstream schools.

The school is currently applying for specialist school status in communication and interaction.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bennerley Fields is a good school. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is outstanding. The school has improved significantly since its last inspection and shows good capacity for further sustained improvement. This improvement is based on an accurate understanding of its strengths and weakness. All of the staff, led effectively by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of the leadership team, work together well for the common aim of providing high quality education and care for each of its pupils. The school works successfully with its partners in the local area, and is very effective in its work with parents.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress as a result of the excellent provision. Personal development and well-being are also good; they are outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community.

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good and sometimes it is outstanding, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff teamwork is very good. Pupils are keen and interested in their work. Lessons are well planned, although occasionally questioning and feedback does not extend learning as well as it could.

Significant improvements have been made in the curriculum and it is now good. The range of activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. There have been particularly valuable developments in the scope and flexibility of what pupils can learn at Key Stage 4. These prepare pupils well for when they move on to college. Enrichment and extra-curricular activities are very good, providing very valuable sporting and cultural learning opportunities.

The quality of care and support is very good. Pupils and parents comment very positively on this quality. Guidance is satisfactory. Pupils do not always know what they need to do to learn even better and are not involved as much as they could be in their self-assessment. Questioning, marking and feedback are not as effective as they could be in all lessons. The welfare of the children is promoted exceptionally well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the quality of their care is outstanding.

Leadership and management are good. Well-established procedures to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of their education are used successfully to inform planning. The school monitors and promotes equality of opportunity for all of its pupils well. The contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory and the school has accurately identified its strengths and the need to extend its work regarding the wider community.

The school meets current government safe recruitment requirements and appropriate staff training on safeguarding takes place.

The governors are very enthusiastic and committed supporters of the school; however, they do not yet have a sufficiently detailed understanding of how well pupils are doing as the basis for ensuring that they are making as much progress as they can.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the parent who said the Early Years Foundation Stage is 'fantastic at developing innovative and imaginative activities so that learning is fun'.

Progress in learning for the youngest children is outstanding. Appropriate emphasis is placed on developing their language and communication skills and these aspects of learning develop very well indeed. The children's personal development and well-being are also excellent. They join in the wide range of activities really well and want to learn. For example, they concentrate so successfully when their interest is captured by the resources used in a sensory story and want to try their best with all of the activities that are offered. Confidence quickly grows when children join the Early Years Foundation Stage and, as a result, their ability to make choices and to learn independently flourish.

Children are helped to learn exceptionally well. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the wide range of needs in the groups. Teachers and assistants work exceptionally well together, based on a detailed understanding of each child's needs. Ongoing assessment effectively builds up a very detailed picture of the progress being made.

Curriculum planning is excellent and ensures the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. The welfare of the children is also promoted exceptionally well and the quality of their care is outstanding. The management of behaviour is extremely effective to make sure progress is as good as it can be. Risk assessments are thorough.

The outstanding quality of this part of the school is the result of exceptionally good leadership, management and teamwork.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate its work to promote community cohesion and extend involvement in the wider community.
- Improve guidance to pupils about how they can make progress, through consistent target setting, marking and questioning.
- Improve the role of governors so that they more effectively use information about the standards that pupils reach and the progress that they make, together with first-hand evidence from their visits to the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children at the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress due to the outstanding quality of the provision. Throughout the school, pupils who have the additional learning needs, including sensory and physical disabilities, speech and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders, achieve as well as one another. The school's monitoring demonstrates that boys and girls do as well as one another; looked after children also achieve as well as others of their age.

Pupils successfully meet the challenging targets in their individual education plans. The school effectively uses P levels to track the good progress that is made across a wide range of subjects. Many pupils achieve exceptionally well in developing their speaking and listening skills and in their reading. Progress in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly since the last inspection and pupils now do as well in this subject as in other areas. Key Stage 4 pupils do well in GCSE art. Older pupils are developing appropriate skills and understanding for their adult life through improvements that have been made to their curriculum, including increasing their understanding of the world of work. They also achieve well in a range of awards, for example, level 1 construction, that prepares them for their transition to college.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A wide range of aspects of the school's provision contributes well to this development, including visits to places of worship to broaden understanding of life in a multicultural society. Pupils really enjoy their lessons and want to learn as much as they can; for example, when young pupils were enthusiastically giving examples of objects beginning with a particular letter sound. They cooperate with one another very well, helping each other when they can in their lessons. They play well together at playtimes. Behaviour is good. Parents strongly agree that their children are safe and happy at school. Pupils feel safe and know who to ask for help if they feel sad or unhappy.

Pupils show how well they understand how to be healthy in their choice of what to eat, including commenting if they see a friend eating something that is less healthy. They are keen to make sure that their school is an attractive place to learn, for example, in caring for the large number of plants tubs around the school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community. They assist in class by taking on responsibilities to help their teachers and assistants, for example, in giving out and collecting resources. The school council contributes extremely well to ensuring that pupils are involved in decision making, such as in asking for extra sports activities at lunchtimes. Pupils enthusiastically take part in fund raising, including for the recent Comic Relief event and are involved in local community events.

Attendance is satisfactory; unauthorised absence is very low. However the overall rate of attendance dips because a small number of pupils miss school due to their medical conditions and health needs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of lessons throughout the school is good and sometimes it is outstanding, especially at the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers and their assistants work very effectively as a team. Lessons are well planned and the pace is usually good. A wide range and variety of activities are used to keep pupils interested and provide challenge for them to learn well. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and help pupils' motivation and attitude to be as good as they are. Staff use their detailed knowledge of individual pupils to provide very effective strategies to keep them on task and ensure there are no interruptions to their learning. Occasionally, the rate of learning slows when expectations of what pupils can achieve is not high enough, or when questioning does not extend what the pupil already knows.

Assessment procedures and systems to track progress are good. Teachers use this information well to match their planning to pupils' needs. Carefully monitoring of how well pupils are learning helps make sure that targets are challenging and any slips in progress are identified and addressed. Moderation of the assessments to ensure they are accurate is especially good. The assessment information is analysed effectively at a whole-school level to inform improvement planning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum ensures pupils have a wide variety of learning experiences as they progress through the school. It has improved since the last inspection and all of the areas for improvement identified at that time have been addressed. Particularly successful attention has been given to extending and increasing the flexibility of what pupils can learn at Key Stage 4, and in ICT. The curriculum has been broadened through links with local primary and secondary schools and a further education college. Further plans are in hand to build on these links. These specific improvements, although still relatively new, have taken place alongside the broader development of the curriculum, including that resulting from national strategies. As a result, there is increased personalisation of the curriculum to meet the needs of each pupil. There is an effective link between curriculum planning and assessment practice. The range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is very good, providing very valuable sporting and cultural learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care and support is very good. The school provides a very safe and welcoming place for pupils. Staff know pupils' personal development needs very well. Pupils and parents comment very positively on the level of care and help that staff provide. Staff undertake careful risk assessments when they plan for trips or new activities. A suitably wide range of educational, medical and specialist therapy professionals work closely and successfully with the school.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils do not always know what their targets are, nor understand what they need to do to learn more effectively. While systems are in place to set challenging targets for each pupil, the use of this information directly with pupils is inconsistent. This includes effective questioning, marking and feedback in lessons, and involving pupils as much as possible in their self-assessing their own work.

The school's single central record demonstrates that all required staff recruitment checks take place. Records also show that appropriate staff training on safeguarding takes place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together to successfully lead the school. They are very well supported by the other members of the leadership team. The effectiveness of the systems and roles that have been developed is evident in the way that the school continued to move forwards during the recent lengthy period of absence of the headteacher, due to illness.

Self-evaluation is accurate and effective in providing a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are well-established procedures to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of their education. This information is drawn together well to inform school planning. Staff share a common aim to provide high quality education and care for their pupils and contribute well to the school's continuous improvement. The school monitors and promotes equality of opportunity for all of its pupils well.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. A valuable audit of this important area of the school's work has accurately identified the strength of the school in its partnership within the local community and the need to extend this to the wider community. Planning for this work has begun, and includes consideration of how the developments will be evaluated.

The governors are very enthusiastic and committed supporters of the school. They do not however yet have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the progress that pupils make, from their own visits to the school and the data they are provided with, to effectively challenge school leaders in ensuring that pupils are doing as well as they can.

The school works very well with parents. Parents' views are routinely sought and contribute to school improvement. Parents commented positively on the quality of the information they receive about their children's work and know they are always listened to if they wish to make suggestions or have matters to discuss. As one parents wrote to the inspection team, 'I feel lucky to have my son attending this school.'

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Bennerley Fields School

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to say that we like your school.

We really enjoyed the time we spent seeing all of the things that you do.

We also want to say 'thank you' to the school council for telling us the best things about your school.

There are many good things about Bennerley Fields School. Here are some.

- You enjoy school.
- You learn many new things.
- You behave well and help one another when you can.
- Everyone at school takes care of you well and helps you learn.
- Your parents think your school is really good.

Mrs Stirling, Mrs Knowles and all of the other staff are working hard to make your school even better. We have asked them to do the following things.

- They are going to make sure that you get more information about how to learn even better than you do now.
- They are going to help you learn more about the world outside of school and the area that you live in.
- Your school governors are going to find out more about how well you are learning so that they can work with your teachers and assistants to make sure you do as well as you can.

You can help them by continuing to work hard.

Charlie Henry

Her Majesty's Inspector