

The Shrubberies School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115823
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326275
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	92
Sixth form	9
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to under 3 years	2
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr William Jackson
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Jones
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2005
School address	Oldends Lane Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2DG
Telephone number	01453 822155
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed aspects of the school's work, for example an assembly, playtime and some of the 'opportunity week' activities for secondary age pupils which took place during the inspection. Inspectors also looked at a range of evidence including data on pupils' progress, pupils' individual education plans, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and 51 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of different groups of pupils and the extent to which all are able to enjoy and achieve
- the quality of teaching across the school and how well assessment information is used to plan lessons
- the organisation of the curriculum and how well it meets the wide range of pupils' needs
- the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its work and how information is used to secure improvement.

Information about the school

The Shrubberies School is a special school providing education for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with an autistic spectrum disorder. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the majority are boys. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and their home language is English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area within the county of Gloucestershire. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two classes which include Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children. The school provides extended services which include: a summer play scheme, parent workshops and support for families, after-school clubs and an outreach service to mainstream schools to support pupils with cognitive delay. The school was granted specialist status for cognition and learning in September 2008.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Shrubberies School provides an outstanding quality of education and care. It is very successful in working closely with parents and other partners to ensure all pupils achieve their potential and are included fully in the life of the school. In the words of one parent, 'It's not just a school; it's a complete package of care and support.' The school is extremely successful in using its specialist status for cognition and learning to provide additional support for parents and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attending mainstream schools.

Standards are low due to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, pupils make good progress in their learning relative to their starting points due to the high quality of teaching and carefully targeted individual support they receive. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle well and make a good start to their education. As they move up the school, the highly effective use of Makaton signing, pictures and symbols to aid communication helps pupils make excellent progress in developing their independence and self-confidence. As a result, pupils are pleased to communicate their views and behave in an extremely thoughtful and mature manner. In relation to their capabilities, they make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community. The outstanding curriculum provides a very broad range of experiences which fosters pupils' excellent understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. By the time they leave school, pupils are very well prepared for their next phase of education or training.

While the school has very good arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, this information is not always used to inform closely teachers' planning. Consequently, in a few classes, particularly in literacy at Key Stage 3, this limits the ability of pupils to build on their existing knowledge. The arrangements for monitoring teaching are generally good but they do not always focus sufficiently on whole-school issues, such as the use of assessment.

The school has been successful in promoting community cohesion at a local level and has forged links with global communities. However, current links have not yet been evaluated to ensure they provide pupils with sufficient knowledge of different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in wider Britain.

Strong leadership has produced significant improvements to key aspects of the school's work since the last inspection. Thoughtful analysis of the school's performance and effective forward planning has led to improved strategies for managing pupils' behaviour, the introduction of an excellent system for tracking pupils' progress, extension of the curriculum and better support for parents. The successful introduction of these changes, and the use of resources to achieve excellent value for money, demonstrate the school has a good capacity for further improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school, although its understanding of how to monitor and challenge the school's performance is underdeveloped.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor teaching more closely to ensure assessment information is used consistently to inform teachers' planning and to enable pupils to build on their existing knowledge and understanding; with a particular focus on the teaching of literacy at Key Stage 3.
- Strengthen its contribution to community cohesion by:
 - evaluating its current links to ensure they take account of different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups
 - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain.
- Extend the governing body's knowledge of how to monitor and challenge the school's performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils achieve well academically and extremely well personally. They make good progress with their learning in the classroom and become much more confident and independent young people by the time they leave school. In lessons, pupils learn to write simple sentences or communicate their ideas through the use of symbols and Makaton signing; they use information and communication technology confidently; they handle equipment safely in practical subjects; and they learn to give their views and listen well to the views of others. Pupils achieve particularly well in Years 10 and 11. Most leave at the end of Year 11 and progress to the local college having gained passes in the National Skills Profile and the Accreditation for Life and Living qualification. Pupils enjoy coming to school which is demonstrated by their good attendance and the excited way in which they describe their participation in the school's activities. They are involved fully in making decisions about the school and are extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being. For example, during the inspection, a group of pupils explained clearly how they had sought funds from the school council for a mini-enterprise, which involved cooking and selling lunchtime snacks. Pupils behave extremely well. Those who communicate verbally are able to hold a mature and polite discussion with visitors. Others who sometimes display anxious and challenging behaviour make excellent progress in learning to

follow routines and in expressing preferences, often using signs and symbols with confidence.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social development is a strength and they have a good knowledge of their local community and culture. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual reflection and for them to develop their understanding of the wider cultural and religious traditions in modern Britain are less developed.

Pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are included effectively in lessons alongside their peers. An appropriate balance of individual work combined with opportunities to join the class group ensures they achieve well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and assistants work together closely and demonstrate a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs. They have excellent relationships with pupils, treating them with respect and encouraging them to try their best. Staff manage any anxious and challenging behaviour very skilfully to reduce confrontation and to ensure it does not disrupt learning. Lessons are planned well to ensure pupils of differing capability are able to participate in learning. Attractive displays including signs and symbols are used very effectively in lessons and around the school to support learning. Practical activities, often linked to everyday situations, are used to capture pupils' interest and ensure all groups succeed. For example, in food technology where pupils prepared and cooked food, the development of mathematical skills was included in the lesson. Staff are deployed very effectively to ensure pupils receive the right level of individual support without compromising their

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

independence.

An excellent system is in place for checking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and comparing the school's performance with similar schools. Targets for improvement are shared with pupils and clearly displayed in classes. Teachers use a good range of assessment information to capture pupils' achievements, for example photographs, annotated samples of work and records of achievement. The use of assessment information to plan lessons varies between classes. At Key Stage 3 in particular, it is not always used to link literacy tasks closely to targets and to inform the marking of pupils' work.

A very wide range of activities is carefully matched to meet the full range of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This includes music therapy, hydrotherapy and speech and language therapy. Additional music, dance and sporting activities, often in partnership with other schools and community organisations, help to develop pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment of school. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is very appropriate with a focus on keeping safe and self-respect. A very broad range of enrichment activities includes residential trips and visits and after-school clubs. The school has suitable plans in place to extend those aspects of its curriculum which need further development, for example sensory resources to extend outdoor play in the Early Years Foundation Stage and an externally accredited course in the sixth form.

The very high standard of care, guidance and support is underpinned by the strong teamwork of staff and the close partnership with parents to ensure care is sensitive to pupils' individual needs. In the words of one parent, 'It is a happy, caring school where my son feels safe and secure.' Parents are particularly appreciative of the support they receive from the school in assessing the family's needs and in planning support such as respite care. Pupils have a 'communication passport' which includes the consideration of their therapeutic and educational needs and intimate care plans ensure pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Thorough arrangements are in place to help pupils settle well when they join the school and to plan appropriate destinations for when they leave.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her able team of senior leaders share a clear vision which is very successfully moving the school forward. The school has used its specialist status to establish a valued presence in the wider community for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff throughout the school are strongly committed to the inclusion of all pupils in the life of the school, whatever their

capabilities, and to ensuring they achieve. At the heart of the school's success is its close partnership with parents and a deep understanding of the needs of families where a child has a learning difficulty and/or disability. As one parent commented, 'The school is a warm, welcoming environment, there is always someone to talk to about concerns, it's like a second family.' Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments of pupils' individual needs, are extremely thorough.

Senior leaders know their school well. Self-evaluation is thorough and planning focuses on improving key aspects of the school's work which will maximise its performance. Good arrangements are in place for regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by the headteacher and senior leaders. While areas for teachers' professional development are identified, there is not always sufficient focus on whole-school issues, such as the use of assessment.

The school has been successful in promoting community cohesion at a local level and has forged links with global communities, for example through its Comenius partnership with schools in Europe. However, current links have not yet been evaluated to ensure they take full account of different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in wider Britain.

The governing body has a satisfactory understanding of the school's work and systems are in place to ensure statutory requirements are met and finances are managed prudently. It is developing its knowledge of how to hold the school to account and to challenge its performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start to their learning, particularly in their personal and social development. This is due to the 'total communication' environment and the very appropriate use of pictures and signing to help children make choices and express their needs. As children develop their communication skills, so their anxiety reduces and their enjoyment of learning and behaviour improves. Assessment information is

used well to identify children's individual strengths and their interests, although it is not always used to inform lessons closely and thereby maximise learning. Good free movement between the indoor and outdoor learning environments promotes children learning, although sensory activities in the outdoor area are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management are good. Good self-evaluation ensures staff are well aware of the next steps for development. Very good communication with parents and other professionals ensures the often quite different needs of children are met fully.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

The sixth form offers a small, specialised provision for students who have complex needs, many of whom join in Year 12 from other special schools. The appropriate focus on developing independent living skills ensures young people make good progress and are prepared well for leaving school. The separate area for the sixth form enables students to feel a sense of progression in a more adult environment. Students are involved in setting and reviewing their targets. Some have a history of challenging behaviour. Staff know individual students extremely well and work very effectively as a team. Any potentially difficult situations are managed sensitively and calmly to minimise students' anxiety.

While teaching is good, opportunities to maximise learning are sometimes missed since the exact skills students are developing are not always sufficiently clear in teachers' planning. Staff use a good range of photographs and certificates to capture students' achievements which culminate in the presentation of a 'Record of Achievement'. They are currently exploring a nationally accredited scheme to underpin the curriculum. This is a positive step. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a very high level of care and resources are used to good effect to ensure each pupil receives the right level of support. As a result, all pupils, including those with the most complex needs, are able to access the curriculum and achieve.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents hold extremely positive views of all aspects of the school's work. The school is in close contact with parents and actively includes their views when considering improvements to the school. Many questionnaires received during the inspection contained appreciative comments which recognise how much their children achieve and enjoy school, the very high standard of care and the support provided for families. A typical comment was, 'My child has had a truly wonderful experience. He has been treated exceptionally well and had his needs expertly met.' A very small number of parents would like more information about how they can support their child's learning. Inspectors found that the school worked very closely with parents, although it is continually seeking ways of strengthening this aspect of its work.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Shrubberies School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 51 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 92 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	3	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



29 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Shrubberies School, Stonehouse, GL10 2DG

Recently, I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit very much and thought it was a very happy school. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at school.

Here are the main points.

- Your school is outstanding and provides you with lots of exciting things to do in school and in the wider community.
- The school helps you to make good progress with your learning and to play a big part in school life and to do more things on your own.
- You really enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is excellent.
- Adults run the school very well and make sure you receive the right level of care and support.
- Adults are very good at using signing, pictures and symbols to help you make your views known.
- The school works very closely with your parents who are extremely pleased with how the school helps you learn.
- To help the school get even better, I have asked teachers to check that the work you are given in lessons is always at the right level to help you learn more.
- I have also asked the school to make sure you learn more about different groups in wider Britain and how they live.
- Finally, I have asked the adults who run the school to check the school is always doing as well as it might.

You can help by always trying your hardest.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector

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