

# Bardwell School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123344
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327885
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Goodchild

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	60
Sixth form	2
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Duncan Granger
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christine Hughes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Hendon Place Bicester OX26 4RZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01869 242182
<b>Fax number</b>	01869 243211

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<b>Age group</b>	2–19
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Bardwell School is a special school for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs because of their severe learning difficulties. An increasing number of pupils have complex difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder. Most pupils are White British and there are rather more boys than girls. There are three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and two students in the newly established sixth form. The school shares a campus with a mainstream nursery and primary school, a secondary school and a family centre.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspection findings show that senior leaders are right in thinking that this is a good school. It is held in high esteem by the vast majority of parents, and pupils clearly gain a great deal of enjoyment from the opportunities that the school provides.

As a result of pupils' learning difficulties, standards are well below those of their mainstream peers, but achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in response to good teaching and a curriculum that is matched well to their learning needs. The school's own records and inspection findings show that there are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with complex difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils make good progress towards their challenging targets and gain a range of qualifications in Years 10 and 11. Aspects of their attainment are now being recognised also through accreditation in Year 9.

Teachers and teaching assistants make very good use of practical resources, symbols, switches and pictures to promote pupils' communication skills, and to help them understand new concepts. In the best lessons, teachers plan exactly what they want all pupils and individuals to learn, but there is considerable variation in the quality of lesson planning. This is then reflected in variation in the quality of teaching, which ranges from outstanding to satisfactory, and is good overall. Pupils have very good opportunities to integrate into nearby mainstream schools and to work alongside their mainstream peers. The school has made a good start in adapting its curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reflect the latest national guidance. It is developing the range of learning opportunities provided in the sixth form to give students increased opportunities to gain accreditation.

Although the quality of education is good overall, the school does some things exceptionally well. It provides a calm and encouraging environment where pupils blossom as individuals. The staff are dedicated and provide high-quality care, guidance and support for the pupils. Parents are very appreciative of the way their children are supported, and one conveyed this by saying, 'Everyone at Bardwell is very friendly, helpful and kind: they are like a family, like angels with hidden wings.' As a result, personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are happy and confident, and knowing that they are valued as individuals does much to promote their self-esteem.

The school is led and managed well and it has made good improvement since the last inspection. The decision to apply for specialist school status for communication and interaction fits well into the headteacher's strategic vision for the school. Working towards specialist status is beginning to focus senior managers' thinking more sharply and has the capacity to increase staff awareness of the 'big picture' and how their practice fits into it. The headteacher has a thorough knowledge of the school's work and is committed to moving the school forward. Much emphasis has been placed on taking part in initiatives, and this has improved the school. However, findings from monitoring are not used as well as they could be to ensure consistency in the way that staff work to promote pupils' academic achievement. The school promotes community cohesion well; it is at an early stage in developing global links. It works very well in partnership with other schools.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has made a good start in developing a range of learning opportunities matched to students' needs in its new sixth form. Students are making good progress in their learning and in their personal development as a result of good teaching. There are plans to build new 14-to-19 provision in Bicester, and the school has requested a base for its sixth form students as part of that. In the meantime accommodation is restricted, and the school is awaiting the arrival of a temporary classroom for use as a sixth-form base. The arrangement, whereby students learn for some of the time alongside their younger peers in Years 10 and 11, is a sensible solution given the very small number of students. Provision is led and managed well. There is a clear understanding of existing strengths and what needs to be done better in order to improve the curriculum.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The school makes good provision for the small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership and management are good, and teamwork among the staff is strong. Sessions are planned well to reflect revised national guidance for this age group, as well as meeting children's individual needs. Teaching is good, and children make very good progress in developing communication skills. The high ratio of adults to children also greatly benefits their personal, social and emotional development, and they are cared for exceptionally well. Staff regularly observe children's learning and keep coherent records of their development; they are beginning to use this information to identify next steps in learning. Partnership with parents is good and improving. Children have access to a good range of learning experiences indoors; the school has rightly identified the need to develop its outdoor space to support all areas of learning.

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

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding, by ensuring that lessons are planned consistently well and that learning objectives are matched closely to the needs of individual pupils.
- Sharpen monitoring and self-evaluation to achieve greater consistency in the way that teachers promote pupils' academic achievement, and ensure that all staff are clear about their role in moving the school forward.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress towards challenging targets in their individual education plans, and towards very specific individual targets in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their communication skills, and show a high level of responsiveness. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress in recording their ideas, often in writing and in some cases by using symbols. They make good progress in numeracy and gain useful practical skills so that they are able to work out how many coins they would need to buy particular products. There are instances of pupils making outstanding progress, and this was evident during the inspection in lessons where learning was matched very closely to the needs of individual pupils. The school's own data show that progress is good overall, with some variation in the amount of progress pupils

make at different points in their development. This reflects variation also in the quality of teaching.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils flourish in a calm atmosphere where they know they are valued as individuals, and where expectations are clear. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and parents say that their children cannot wait to get to school. Attendance is good and pupils' exceptionally good behaviour means that they have regard for their own safety and that of others. They relate very well to one another, and older pupils often help younger ones. Pupils respond very well to the school's efforts to make them aware of the importance of healthy eating and readily take part in a range of physical activities. Pupils eagerly put forward their ideas as members of the Eco Committee and know that their views are listened to. They have some very good opportunities to develop their social skills and increase their self-belief, for instance by taking part in a performance of Hamlet in the Shakespeare Schools Festival. Pupils readily take responsibility in school, and make a good contribution to the community. Older pupils learn about the world of work, and have very good opportunities to take part in work experience and enterprise activities. The school ensures that they develop a range of important personal qualities and make good progress in their basic skills: this prepares them well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, and teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants and therapists is a strength. Teachers have established very good relationships with their pupils and usually manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well. This minimises difficulties, for example, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. In outstanding lessons, teaching is very purposeful, learning proceeds at a brisk pace, communication is exceptionally clear, and expectations are high. Where there are shortcomings in teaching that is otherwise good and occasionally satisfactory, these stem from insufficient clarity in lesson planning. Learning objectives are at times much too general and some lesson planning is sketchy. Assessment is good and improving. The school has used moderation to increase the accuracy of teachers' assessments and has clear plans for extending the already good range of methods it uses to assess pupils' attainment. The school provides good opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning and is listening to parents' ideas about how to extend this further.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and interests. There is good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and opportunities for pupils to use ICT have improved since the last inspection so that they are now good. In a curriculum that is good overall, there are some outstanding features. Pupils' learning is enriched by a number of special events, such as science, modern foreign languages, arts and Eco weeks. Displays around the school show the varied topics that they have studied, including, for example, Japan and the

solar system. Work towards becoming an Eco School provides pupils with stimulating experiences and encourages them to think about their environment. Involvement in the Forest Schools initiative does much to promote pupils' personal development as well as their knowledge and understanding of nature. For instance, pupils have taken part in obstacle courses, problem solving, team games and learned about tents, shelters and camp fires. The school has made good use of a number of national awards, including Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark, to develop its curriculum and raise pupils' achievement. A very wide range of enrichment activities, including educational visits and welcoming visitors into the school, extends pupils' learning. Pupils have good opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications up to the end of Year 11. The school is working to increase opportunities for the small number of students at post-16 to gain accreditation and to develop further college links.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff show a high level of dedication and commitment to supporting pupils' physical, mental and emotional needs. The school works extremely well with other agencies to promote pupils' personal development. It accommodates local child development team meetings and liaises very closely with a wide range of therapists and other professionals. This supports the school's work in caring for its own pupils as well as its outreach support to other local schools. Pupils' personal development is monitored very closely and there are highly developed procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. Arrangements for keeping pupils safe and protected are good. Their academic progress is tracked well and information is used very well to set individual targets. Where possible, pupils are encouraged to contribute to reviewing their own progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's strong leadership has enabled the school to sustain and build on the many positive features found at the last inspection. She is supported well by other members of the senior team, and the governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. Self-evaluation is based on detailed monitoring, and there has been good improvement in the role of subject leaders since the last inspection. There is a strong commitment to improving the school, and it is continuously developing. Senior leaders readily embrace new initiatives and are currently preparing to apply for specialist school status for communication and interaction. Prioritising communication has already led to good improvement in this area, and the school is well placed to improve further. The headteacher has an accurate knowledge of the school's work, and lesson observation is very thorough. However, while extremely thorough systems underpin the outstanding care, guidance and support, information from monitoring is not always used as well as it could be to ensure that all teachers work to the same high expectations. This has led to considerable variation in the way in which teachers plan their lessons, as there is no set format and some teachers evaluate their lessons in detail whereas others do not. Improvements to address this variation in the quality of teaching, and a slight increase in clarity in senior leaders' thinking, should support the school in its drive to become outstanding.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
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?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	2
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	
The extent to which 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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2	
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**

23 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bardwell School, Bicester, OX26 4RZ

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school. I came to see how well your school is doing, to find out what is already really good about it and to see if there are any things it could do even better.

I found that you go to a good school that does some things really well.

- It provides a calm and encouraging atmosphere where you blossom as individuals.
- You are happy and confident, and know that you are valued; this does a lot to make you feel good about yourselves.
- The staff care about you very much, and many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the way the school looks after you.
- You make good progress with your work and do especially well in developing communication skills, some of you using switches, symbols or pictures to help you.
- You get a chance to learn about some very interesting things, like the work you have done on Japan and finding out about the planets.

The headteacher leads the school well and she is eager to make the school as good as possible. I want to help her to do this, so I have asked her and the other managers to:

- make sure that all the teachers think very carefully, when they plan your lessons, about what they want you to learn
- use what they already know about the school to make it better and see that everyone is clear about what they need to do to help.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Bardwell and wish you good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Goodchild

Lead Inspector