

Belmont School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131549
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	328609
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Richings
Headteacher	Anne Maddison
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2005
School address	Warden Hill Road Cheltenham GL51 3AT
Telephone number	01242 216180
Fax number	01242 227827

Age group	4–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Belmont is designated for pupils with moderate and additional learning difficulties (MALD), with needs including autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), speech and language difficulties and school phobia. Specialist School status was gained in July 2006, for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and since then there have been significant increases in pupils with complex and challenging behaviours. Although there are no Early Years Foundation Stage children or Year 1 pupils, many more primary age pupils are now admitted than in previous years. Attainment on entry to Year 2 and for pupils arriving across the school is well below average. The standards achieved by all pupils against national averages remain well below due to their significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils have statements. They are almost entirely White British. The school has gained many awards such as public servants of the year 2006. The following awards gained have been redesignated at both primary and secondary levels: basic skills quality mark, active and sportsmark 2007, healthy schools, and international schools 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Belmont is a good school. Pupils' personal development and their pastoral care are outstanding. The visionary and innovative skills of the headteacher and her skilled leadership team are raising the profile of successful achievement in special education within and well beyond the local community. Community cohesion is excellent, with staff working closely with an increasing number of partner schools and colleges so that pupils have many opportunities for enhancing their life skills. All pupils, including a greater number with more complex and challenging behaviours who have joined since specialist designation, are fully involved in their learning and the life of the school.

Parents express almost entirely positive views about their children's enjoyment of learning. Pupils build strong friendships, developing into confident and caring individuals working as independently as their needs allow. Behaviour, despite the challenges encountered by many, is excellent, due in no small part to pupils' enjoyment of the 'Good Choices, Poor Choices' reward system and this has a positive impact on learning. Attendance is good. Pupils love school and have an infectious sense of fun.

Pupils achieve well, making good progress as they move through school because teaching is good. It is particularly effective in helping the oldest pupils successfully gain qualifications or certificates. Pupils receive an excellent level of care underpinned by the very strong and effective links with families and support agencies. However, pupils are not always fully aware of the challenging learning targets they are set or how best to improve their work.

Another feature of the school's changing intake is the rising number of primary pupils. Following the significant increase in the number of younger pupils entering the school, staff have readily taken on new roles and started to adopt skills to more fully meet their needs. There is some good primary expertise to serve as a foundation, but more development of age appropriate teaching and learning strategies is needed. Similarly, the current curriculum leans towards the needs of older pupils and requires further development to fully meet the different needs and interests of the greater number of younger pupils.

The school is moving forward at a good pace, with a new enthusiastic governing body which is increasingly effective. It is responding well to the significant changes in its pupil population, demonstrating a good capacity to improve further. The school has successfully met the challenge of meeting a wider range of behavioural needs since its specialist designation, with increased funding for staffing and resources. Provision to specifically address the needs of younger pupils now needs more emphasis. The school scrupulously gathers and analyses a considerable quantity of pupil progress data, although systems in use do not always highlight small changes in progress sufficiently clearly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies fully engage younger pupils and meet their needs.
- Use data more effectively to clearly show small changes in progress, to aid planning and enhance pupils' awareness of their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From very low starting points, pupils achieve well, making good progress as they move through the school. Progress accelerates through Years 7 to 11, particularly in Key Stage 4, because of the thorough preparation pupils receive, enabling them to very successfully gain nationally recognised qualifications or accreditation by the end of Year 11. A minority of secondary age pupils with gaps in their prior education, ill health or who are poor attenders achieve less well. A large number of primary age pupils from Years 2 to 6 have just joined the school and their rate of progress is slower than that of older pupils because teaching and the curriculum are not yet as well adapted to their needs. Pupils with different learning difficulties, including those with complex and challenging behaviour, make equally good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils arrive with huge smiles ready to do their best. Their attendance is good. Parents say their children want to be in school even when it is closed and comment on improved behaviour and attitudes. Pupils share much good humour. Behaviour and relationships are excellent, remaining so even in long lessons, when pupils' concentration and ability to listen in near 'pin drop' silence is quite remarkable. They enjoy learning basic skills, reading, English, mathematics and sport. Computers are popular, as one pupil said 'Computers are cool!' The youngest pupils are happy and settled, quickly developing the ability to behave and learn together. They love trying to identify letters. Pupils are extremely tolerant and supportive, knowing when others are having a bad day. Pupils feel very safe, talking openly about any concerns. Asked about bullying, pupils' respond 'No way, no bullies here!' They eat well and are very keen to stay healthy and active, with impressive success in competitive inter-school sports including football. School councillors take their duties seriously, ensuring that their views are acted on when possible. Pupils gain independence and self-esteem, with high aspirations for their future adult lives. Excellent 'real work' experience, college links and school-based vocational opportunities enhanced through specialist status enable pupils to make impressive gains in workplace and life skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are proud school ambassadors, relishing rewards, knowing that they can choose to improve their own behaviour, attitudes and community responsibility. They gain a very good awareness of other cultures, communities and faiths through the school's links with other countries. Pupils enjoy visiting the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships are excellent. Good subject knowledge and questioning extend pupils' thinking with time to offer answers. Clear, repeated communication enables pupils to grasp new learning concepts. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 7 to 11, with strategies very well matched to the learning needs of older pupils, including very thorough preparation for courses that provide nationally recognised accreditation. Strategies to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of younger pupils are becoming increasingly effective but are not yet as well established. Strategies to address the needs of the higher numbers of pupils with complex

behavioural needs, following the school's specialist designation, are extremely effective. Management of challenging behaviour is outstanding, using the right kinds of intervention so disruption is minimal. There is seamless interchange between teachers and learning support workers (LSWs) working skilfully together to encourage pupils' enjoyment and interest, often using praise. Assessment for learning does not always consistently inform planning because systems do not identify sufficiently clearly, the small steps in progress made.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is strong for pupils in Years 7 to 11 with long established excellence in work related learning, careers education and college and employment links so that pupils are empowered to follow their interests and future goals. Specialist status and funding has increased opportunities through vocational learning, mainstream school links, outreach work and access to holistic therapies such as counselling and anger management. The school is entering a new phase of curriculum development to meet the expanded primary department needs. In English, for example, there is good whole school planning for younger pupils but in most other subjects there is insufficient emphasis on planning provision for pupils in Years 2 to 6. Opportunities for enrichment and community activities are outstanding in widening pupils' life experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The impressive knowledge and understanding that staff have of their pupils underpins the excellent pastoral care and its very positive impact on raising pupils' self-esteem. Families are supported very well through very good access to health and therapy support enabling their children to maintain consistency in their learning. Safeguarding procedures and attention to pupils' safety are secure. Monitoring of behaviour and attendance is high calibre, significantly reducing fixed term exclusions and raising pupil attendance. Parents are appropriately involved in formal reviews and setting of targets in individual behaviour or learning plans. A few would like more teacher meetings. Challenging targets are displayed in classrooms and on individual cards, but pupils do not always fully distinguish clearly enough between their learning and behaviour targets. This in turn limits their ability to independently improve the quality of their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads her dedicated leadership team by example, earning their respect and the admiration of her staff. She has sensitively led her school through significant change, staying focussed on sustaining and enhancing positive outcomes for pupils. She has successfully raised the profile of special education and the school's standing in the local and wider community. She takes on many initiatives to secure improvements, not least acquisition of specialist school status. In this she is aided by staff who have effectively adopted new roles. Successful teamwork including that of learning support workers enhances pupils' enjoyment of their learning. The new governing body is developing effective skills and displays a strong commitment to the local community. The school knows itself well, taking good account of the views of stakeholders. It has responded with vigour and determination to changes in its intake and acknowledges that planning to more fully meet the needs of younger pupils needs greater

emphasis. Despite a wealth of data analyses, systems for tracking pupils' performance do not consistently highlight small changes in progress. Staff development is well established, enhancing professional skills and pupils' learning. Community cohesion is outstanding, involving a very wide range of partnerships with other providers and agencies, and has a positive impact on the school's outreach and inclusion work.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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
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	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 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?	1
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**

18 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Belmont School, Cheltenham, GL51 3AT

You made us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting so many of you. You told us a lot about your school and what you most enjoy. Thank you for helping us.

We think that you go to a good school and that your achievement is good. The excellent relationships that you have with all staff, including your headteacher, are clearly evident. We can see that you all have many very good friends and have a lot of fun. We are very pleased to see your excellent behaviour and personal development. We know how much you like using computers and you told us that you really enjoy going out on visits. We think that your teachers and learning support workers are doing a good job in helping you to learn and that you are well cared for. We can also see that your school is well run. Your attendance is good and you want to come to school.

There are two things we have suggested to your school that they should improve:

- that they make sure that the curriculum and teaching and learning fully meet the needs of those of you who are younger pupils.
- that your headteacher and teachers think of better ways to look at the progress you are making to help them plan and help you understand how to improve your work.

You can help by always working hard. We know you will enjoy the rest of your time at school.

My best wishes

Judi Bedawi Lead inspector