

Beckmead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101853
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	335795
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Alcaraz
Headteacher	Debbie Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed involving 11 teachers and seven learning support assistants. Meetings were held with students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, Local Authority reports, school policies, lesson plans, assessments of student's progress and 13 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- how well all groups of students are progressing in all Key Stages and subjects
- how well all students attend and behave and whether Black African Caribbean students are over represented in exclusions
- how well qualified and experienced all the staff are to meet the needs of the students
- how well leadership and management have addressed issues raised at the last inspection
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Information about the school

Beckmead is the Local Authority's only specialist school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. All the students have a statement to support their special educational needs. These are primarily social, emotional and behavioural needs but several students also have other medical and learning difficulties. Over a quarter of students join the school at various times throughout the school year. About 15% of students are looked after by the Local Authority or private foster carers. About 90% of students are in Key Stages Three and Four. Just over a third are of African and/or Caribbean descent but none speak English as an additional language. The proportion eligible for free school meals is far higher than in most other schools. Fixed term exclusions are extremely common. The school provides a breakfast club for students from 8.15am. The school has had many staff changes, in teaching and leadership, over the past two years. Over half the current teaching staff were new to the school in September 2009.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to attendance, behaviour, progress and the curriculum.

Leaders and managers, including the experienced and competent governors, have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Despite the significant challenges it has been through, leaders have used their knowledge and skills well to improve aspects of the school. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory but elements such as developing leadership and management have been hampered by changes that are more recent. New developments have included building a sports hall. They have raised the quality of teaching, increased the school's focus on learning, created a pupil engagement team, and reduced the number of exclusions. These have involved accurate monitoring to identify weaknesses, astute analysis to decide the best course of remedial action and effective support to address weaknesses. Although other areas, such as behaviour, are being addressed, the full impact of these developments is not yet evident, especially for some students of Black African Caribbean descent. Behaviour is improving but remains inadequate as outbursts of emotion still disrupt too much learning.

Leaders are aware of other weaknesses in the schools such as the curriculum and students' attendance, and are beginning to address them. They are developing the curriculum with the aim of maximising opportunities for students to attain General Certificates of Education. They anticipate more successes in English and mathematics at entry level this year than ever before. This focus has, however, resulted in teachers concentrating strongly on their own subjects and led to insufficient cross-curricular links. Several teachers are new to the school and to teaching students with social, behavioural and emotional needs. Some teachers lack confidence and expertise to cover subjects other than their own, and recently when some staff were absent due to sickness, students did not have consistent access to all subjects. Additionally, the curriculum is not always sufficiently well adapted to students' learning levels or styles and some aspects do not actively engage students or contribute well to their progress or behaviour.

Although progress, especially in English and mathematics, has improved considerably over the last year this remains inadequate overall. A major factor contributing to this is the very high rate of absence. About a third of students are on part time placements.

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This is intended to support some highly vulnerable students and retain their links with the school. Whilst some of these arrangements are successful and rigorous review procedures usually involving parents, carers and other agencies effectively address issues and reintegrate students, some part time placements have continued for too long. This has reduced the time students have been in lessons, slowing improvements in learning and behaviour. Absence due to exclusions has been reduced as the rate of these has declined. Leaders and managers have identified the need to raise attendance and are beginning to address these issues.

Overall, the improvements leaders and managers have already made, particularly those in raising the quality of teaching and reducing rates of exclusion, indicate satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement. Perceptive governors assure that staff are challenged and relatively new members are rapidly gaining the confidence and skills needed for development. The school are now poised to continue the work they have begun, develop new initiatives and see the full impact of what they have already implemented.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- improving monitoring and evaluation to ensure that all students do as well as they can
- improving the curriculum to ensure that all students get a consistent balance of subjects they are entitled to and that lessons motivate and engage all students effectively
- improving attendance by addressing issues of part time placements, ensuring that provision successfully motivate all students and continuing to improve behaviour so that exclusions further decline

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Progress, particularly in English and mathematics, has improved over the past year in all key stages. A strong focus on GCSEs means that entry level passes, especially in English and mathematics are higher than ever before. About 75% of boys in Year 11 are expected to obtain an entry-level grade in each of these. However, some boys are capable of far more and progress across the school remains inadequate as absence is too high and, despite improvements, learning is still too frequently disrupted by poor behaviour. Students particularly enjoy and make good progress in some practical lessons such as Physical Education and Art. They were well engaged in one art lesson painting or drawing things, they were scared of. They had discussed issues of fear well and used computers to research images, before they embarked on their art. This lesson helped their speaking, listening and information communication technology skills as well as their art and contributed well to their satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Younger boys made good progress in their knowledge and skills of Rugby with the positive input from, and role model of, a London Irish player. Their focus and behaviour were managed well despite the volatile reactions of some.

Despite poor behaviour, students feel safe because they know that sanctions are

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implemented consistently and fairly whenever necessary and that staff are there to help them. Students also help support each other, for example, chatting to a peer and calming them down before a situation escalates. They have an adequate understanding of how to live healthy lives even if they do not always follow this fully. They enjoy balanced, freshly cooked, meals and a well developed programme of sports. Students contribute satisfactorily to their school and wider community through serving on the school council and raising money for charity. They are insufficiently well prepared for later life and learning because absence is high and overall attainment in basic skills is low.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although many teachers were new to the school and to special schools at the beginning of the year, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Due to effective induction and frequent well-focused monitoring, teachers are gaining confidence and skills. Relationships, particularly with teaching assistants, are generally good. Staff generally work successfully together to meet the needs of students. They know the students well

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

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who attend frequently and usually manage and support their behaviour effectively. Despite this, occasional outbursts continue to disrupt lessons and slow progress. Although planning is clear and work is varied for different students, it does not always match learning levels and styles satisfactorily.

All the students who attend are cared for and supported well as individuals. The relatively new behaviour policy is already having a positive impact and students appreciate the consistent and fair use of rewards and sanctions. As a result, behaviour is improving and exclusions are declining. The pupil engagement and family learning teams have significant impact in the good personal development of some students. Several now speak calmly to their classes, teachers and visitors who were not able to do this a year ago. Systems to improve attendance are being reviewed but are not yet fully in place or sufficiently effective. Although the attendance of some students has risen significantly, overall rates remain low.

The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs is inconsistent. A strong focus on individual subjects, including English and mathematics, has had a positive impact on exam success. However, links between subjects are at relatively early stages. Several staff are new to teaching students with these particular needs and have more confidence and skills in their own subject specialisms than across the curriculum. When colleagues are absent they have continued to teach their own subjects to other classes, and so there has not been a consistent balance across subjects to all classes this year. This has resulted in students in all key stages not always having their full entitlement to all subjects.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have made effective use of their accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to implement changes and develop the school. This is evident in developments so far. Governors are highly experienced and astute. They know the school well and successfully challenge and support the staff to aid its development. Leaders and staff vigilantly ensure that policies and procedures for safeguarding student's health and safety are fully in place even though students are not always actively involved in these themselves. The deputy head teacher has assumed his role well and made significant impact in school development. Other leaders and managers have not yet had sufficient time to implement their roles fully. Leaders are beginning to

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address issues of attendance but the full impact of this work is not yet evident. Behaviour has improved but continues occasionally to disrupt learning.

Partnerships with other agencies is satisfactory, transition to college is generally supported well and other professionals such as sports coaches are used well to extend experiences and opportunities. Engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. Although positive contacts and relationships with some families have a beneficial impact on the behaviour, attendance and progress of some students, as well as contact with other families remain difficult. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has a good understanding of its students and its locality, and has some impact, for example through sports fixtures and charity events, locally and further afield. This is in the early stages of development and has not yet been evaluated fully. Leaders are aware of limitations in the curriculum, are supporting teacher's confidence and skill and have a full complement of staff in place for September. They have successfully used frequent, well-focused monitoring and evaluation of teaching to raise its quality. The full impact of other monitoring and evaluation is not yet fully evident. Although they are aware of some variations between groups such as in exclusion rates, they do not yet have sufficient information to ensure that equal opportunities are consistently as good as they could be. The track record of leaders and managers in developing the school indicates satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement even though the full impact of their work is not yet evident. The school, however, does not currently offer sufficient value for money for all its students and requires significant improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

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Fewer than 20% of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Despite a high number of concerns, the majority of those who responded were positive about the provision. A large majority feel that the teaching is good, that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour, keeps them well informed, helps them support their children at home, meets their children's needs well and prepares them well for the future. The majority of parents and carers are satisfied with the teaching that their children receive. They feel their children enjoy school, are safe, and are making sufficient progress and that the school leaders and managers are effective. They also feel that their views are taken into account. These responses recognise some of the difficulties that the school faces but there were more positive than negative responses to all questions suggesting sound parental support and capacity to develop the school further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beckmead School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 13 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 71 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	8	6	46	4	31	1	8
The school keeps my child safe	4	31	3	23	4	31	1	8
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	31	6	46	0	0	1	8
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	15	5	38	4	31	1	8
The teaching is good at this school	5	38	4	31	3	23	1	8
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	23	6	46	2	15	1	8
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	23	5	38	4	31	1	8
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	23	6	46	2	15	1	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	15	7	54	3	23	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	46	3	23	1	8	3	23
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	31	2	15	4	31	2	15
The school is led and managed effectively	2	15	5	38	4	31	2	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	23	5	38	3	23	2	15

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Beckmead School, Croydon, BR3 3BZ

Thank you for being friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. We particularly enjoyed being in an art lesson, having lunch with you and watching you play sport. Thank you for all the things you told us about your school.

We can see that the school is improving. All the lessons we saw were at least satisfactory and some were good. We can see that behaviour is improving and that the number of exclusions is going down. You generally feel safe because you know that clear sanctions are in place and that staff are there to support you. You have a satisfactory understanding of health even if you do not always choose to follow this. The school is likely to have the highest number of GCSE passes than it ever has. However, you are not all making as much progress as you could because you do not attend regularly. In addition, even though behaviour is improving, too much learning is still interrupted by this. You have had lots of staff changes recently as several teachers have been ill and new ones have joined the school. There have been changes in the timetable and you do not always get enough lessons in all the different subjects. This has not helped your learning well enough.

We do not think that your school is currently giving you a good enough education. However, we can see that lots of things are improving and think that the senior leaders are able to make the school better for you all. We have asked them to improve attendance, behaviour, the curriculum (that is, what you learn) and progress.

Perhaps you can help by behaving as well as you can and staying as calm as you can when things are difficult for you. Also by making good use of the pupil engagement team and the family learning team when you need to.

Yours sincerely

Jo Curd

Lead inspector

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