

Frank Wise School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123332
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340317
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Barter

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doug Seymour
Headteacher	Sean O'Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2006
School address	Hornbeam Close Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 9RL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Approximately one half of the inspection time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with the school council, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the curriculum documents for pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form, assessments of pupils' progress, annual review reports, safeguarding procedures and audits of the school's work relating to its specialist status. Forty eight parental questionnaires, sixty eight staff questionnaires and nine questionnaires from pupils in Years 3 to 11 were analysed.

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

- how well the school meets the needs of students in the sixth form
- the impact of the school's specialist status in improving pupils' outcomes
- the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including those under the age of three
- the effectiveness of the role of subject leaders
- how well the school evaluates the impact of its work to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school provides for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties. After Beacon status from 2004 to 2007, it was designated a Specialist School (SEN) in Cognition and Learning in 2007. Its work has been recognised through a number of awards including International School and Becta ICT Excellence Award (runner-up). Children start school in the assessment nursery from the age of two, although some pupils join the school in later year groups. Children of Early Years Foundation Stage age are taught in the nursery and in a family group with Year 1 pupils. The school was designated as a post-16 provider from September 2008 and an increasing number of students age 16 to 19 are choosing to stay on in the sixth form (The Griffiths Centre). The headteacher became the acting headteacher in September 2007 and took the substantive post in September 2008.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Frank Wise School is an outstanding and inspirational school. All pupils make exceptional progress right from the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children get the best possible start to school, through to the new sixth form, which prepares students very well for the future. This success is down to the first-class leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leadership team, the highly effective team work of subject leaders and staff, and the excellent support and challenge offered by the governing body. Parents and carers praise the school highly, describing it as 'amazing' and 'wonderful'. One parent rightly summed up the school's outstanding effectiveness by saying that it provides 'a supportive, challenging and stimulating environment that is designed to help children achieve their potential'.

The school has very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and all are viewed as people with the potential to learn and succeed. It uses all the information about pupils' progress available to question at every turn whether each and every individual is doing as well as they possibly can. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of pupils' needs and provide work that is challenging, interesting and achievable. The benefits of excellent staff training and professional development opportunities are evident in the high levels of expertise shown by teachers and other staff. The remarkable consistency of the quality of teaching throughout the school, the outstanding Frank Wise Curriculum and work developed through the specialist status, for example on early reading and writing skills, are at the very heart of pupils' academic and personal achievements. Pupils say that learning is the thing they enjoy best of all. These highly positive attitudes, combined with first-rate care, guidance and support, are seen in pupils' confidence to attempt work without fear of failure and in their relaxed and happy demeanour around the school.

This is a school which thrives on challenge. It evaluates meticulously the effectiveness of its actions, such as how its specialist work has an impact in developing community cohesion, while keeping a firm eye on how initiatives improve pupils' progress and prepare them for life ahead. Nowhere is this more evident than in the outstanding work by leaders and managers to develop the sixth-form provision to such a high quality in a very short space of time. They rigorously and continuously assess how well the Griffiths Centre curriculum is meeting students' needs and are leaving no stone unturned in their pursuit to find sustainable work experience opportunities for as many students as possible. At the same time, the school recognises the need to source supported living experiences to meet some of its students' particular needs. This demonstrable success in meeting the broadened age range of the school in a short space of time, combined with sustained and excellent improvement since the last inspection, confirms the school's

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outstanding capacity for continued improvement in the future, and its excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the already excellent Griffiths Centre curriculum by:
 - extending the range of sustainable work experience opportunities
- providing supported living experiences to meet the needs of some individual students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

At the very heart of pupils' outstanding achievements is their tremendous enjoyment of school. No wonder that attendance is above average, when so many pupils ' and staff ' battled to get to school during the recent heavy snow! The learning environment in every family group is supportive but staff never take their eye off the ball in their determination that pupils will make the best possible progress. The school sets very challenging targets and is rigorous in its assessments of pupils' progress against their individual targets and also in using nationally recognised measures. It demonstrates fully in its tracking and assessment data that there is no significant variation between any pupils, regardless of their needs or backgrounds, and that year by year pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points, with a very high percentage meeting their individual learning targets. All pupils gain a number of AQA (Accredited Qualifications Alliance) Unit Awards by the age of 16.

Pupils have outstanding behaviour and attitudes to school. They are motivated to learn because lessons are very skilfully planned for each of their individual abilities. The excellent work done to help pupils improve their communication skills means that pupils use signs, symbols and technology to communicate their responses and record their learning. Schemes to develop early reading and writing skills are paying dividends in improving pupils' basic skills further, with more evidence of pupils recording their own work. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are outstanding, for example pupils were observed using a switch to communicate animal sounds they had researched on the internet. Pupils' physical skills are developed well, with many gaining valuable swimming skills in the hydrotherapy pool. Pupils say how much they enjoy art and this is highly evident in the excellent work seen in displays, such as that on Van Gogh, around the school.

Pupils' social and emotional development is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe, appreciating the care from staff when they have personal worries. The high level of participation in sport and exercise is evidence of pupils' commitment to fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils and students are superb ambassadors for young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the community. The assured manner in which they discuss their views in the school council, and represent their school at the Oxfordshire Youth Parliament, is remarkable. Pupils have a high level of respect and understanding for others and their confidence and self-esteem is evidence of how very

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well these young people are prepared for life beyond school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The special ingredient in the outstanding quality of teaching is the meticulous assessment of pupils' learning and teachers' precise planning of activities which are exactly matched to pupils' individual needs and which motivate pupils to learn. The school uses an impressive 'battery' of assessments which are tailored to all the pupils' very different needs and abilities. Much progress has been made since the last inspection in the detailed analysis of these assessments by teachers and senior leaders to ensure that even minor slips in progress are identified and action is swiftly taken to close any gaps in learning.

Team work in the family groups between teachers and highly trained teaching assistants is first rate. Warm relationships, high expectations and excellent quality care and

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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guidance by staff give pupils confidence to meet the challenges set for them and staff give them every chance to succeed. The consistent quality of communication with pupils and purposeful pace of learning are significant factors in the success of the school's teaching. Pupils and staff enjoy learning together, for example, being a human 'number machine' in a numeracy lesson or producing the superb Christmas DVD, 'A Miracle on Hornbeam Close', shown to great acclaim at a local cinema. There is a tremendous shared sense of pride in the school's achievements, with pupils often representing the school alongside the staff when it wins awards.

The well-established Frank Wise Curriculum results in high quality outcomes for pupils, particularly in their language and communication, numeracy, intellectual and reasoning skills, ICT and personal, social and health education. There is a very good balance between academic content and developing the important personal skills needed for future life, with many opportunities for pupils to learn with others in mainstream settings, in the local community and internationally. The school constantly thinks 'outside the box' in order to improve pupils' learning further. Innovations, such as the current trial of a programme to help pupils who find the physical technique of writing in lower case letters difficult, are always carefully evaluated for their effectiveness prior to more widespread implementation.

The school is a happy place in which pupils feel safe and well cared for, especially within the family group structure. The staff's knowledge about pupils' individual difficulties is excellent and the supporting medical, therapeutic and professional expertise contributes considerably to the high quality of care which enables pupils to flourish. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are very effectively supported so that incidents are very rare. Nearly all parents and carers feel that the school affords their children high levels of care and concern and that they are extremely well communicated with about their children's day-to-day experiences through the home-school diary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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 dedicated leadership team has an exceptionally clear vision for the continued development of the school, which is realised in practice. For example, raising disability awareness through the specialist status work with teaching assistants and their pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings, and the development of the iWise media centre to support the school's own excellence in ICT learning, and for use

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by partner schools.

While the school is dedicated in its pursuit of excellence and innovation, it is also clear that the prime focus of their work is to improve learning for pupils even further. The role of subject leaders is well developed so that they, as well as senior leaders, have a clear view about how well the school is performing. The school's practice is rooted in rigorous self-evaluation where monitoring of teaching, scrutiny of assessments of pupils' progress and views of parents, carers and other stakeholders are key instruments in identifying what needs to improve. Equality of opportunity for all is a core value which pervades all activities and results in each pupil's individual needs being exceptionally well met. Pupils are treated with the utmost dignity and respect and there is no evidence of any discrimination. Very effective procedures and management systems are in place to ensure pupils are safe and secure. At the time of the inspection, the school met governmental requirements for safeguarding pupils.

The school plans and audits carefully its work to promote community cohesion, for example the numbers of pupils with special educational needs who remain well provided for in mainstream settings as a result of work with partner schools and the increased participation of pupils and families in local facilities through the work of the Out of School Liaison Officer. The school has excellent and productive links with partner organisations locally, nationally and globally, seeing the impact of its work, for example, in a pupils' podcast at a national conference on raising achievement or in special needs teaching in a school in New Jersey, USA by a former visiting student.

The highly-skilled governing body strikes an excellent balance between support and challenge and asks searching questions of the senior leadership team. Governors are fully involved in all decision making and action planning and work with total commitment to ensure the very best provision for the pupils at Frank Wise School.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children who start in the nursery from the age of two settle well and thrive because they are exceptionally well looked after in the positive and happy learning environment. Children of Early Years Foundation Stage age in the nursery and in the first family group learn and develop exceptionally well because of outstanding teaching and high quality support from other adults and therapists. Staff are extremely skilful in using an effective range of communication strategies such as signing and symbols to encourage children to understand language and begin interacting. Children quickly develop an understanding of daily routines because of the consistent approach of staff. Staff all have high expectations that children will engage in learning yet are sensitive to their young age and offer high levels of care.

Detailed assessments are used exceptionally well to plan precise tasks which match children's individual levels of development. They also inform records of children's achievements very well, providing examples of small steps to improvement as children develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Staff use this information very well to provide activities that challenge and stimulate the children, for example encouraging hand and arm movements to explore coloured materials in a creative session, or using large dice and monkey trees in a numeracy lesson with Year 1 pupils. Relationships are excellent and contribute considerably to children's enjoyment of learning. Excellent understanding of the needs of children of this age and experienced leadership are key factors in the success of this provision. Links with parents and carers are excellent and help them to understand how their children are supported to learn at the start of their schooling.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Prior to its inception, senior leaders, along with the whole teaching staff, planned with care to establish an innovative and creative Griffiths Centre curriculum which is entirely appropriate to students' needs and maximises their academic and personal outcomes. Students already make excellent progress in the centre, with all leaving with AQA

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accreditation units. Staff match their teaching extremely well to the needs of the students because the exemplary assessment systems used in the main school are continued through to the sixth form. Activities are very well matched to students' needs and build well on their skills. Through rigorous and ongoing evaluation of the provision, senior leaders have correctly identified the need to build further opportunities for work experience for all students and to work with local providers to source opportunities for students to experience supported living in preparation for their lives beyond school.

The quality of care is as excellent for students as it is for other pupils. While promoting independence and maturity, staff are vigilant about the more vulnerable students and ensure that all understand how to stay safe and act appropriately when outside the school. Students are very positive about the Griffiths Centre. They like being part of a distinct group where they are treated as young adults. Their personal development is outstanding and they behave very well. They are proud of their new environment where they can work and socialise together and are welcoming to visitors, making coffee and chatting about activities, such as their highly successful enterprise scheme to sell Christmas cards. Above all, students enjoy practising and developing their skills of independence as they 'go out and about' in the community, for example researching where they can seek help to maintain their oral hygiene, using their passes for bus travel and enjoying local swimming and golf facilities.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Those parents and carers who returned questionnaires were almost overwhelmingly supportive of the school's provision and the outcomes it achieves. Almost all responses were positive, with most expressing strong agreement with almost every aspect of the parental questionnaire. The extent to which pupils enjoy school, are kept safe, the way the school meets their particular needs, manages their behaviour and informs parents and carers about their progress were all rated particularly highly. One typical comment said, 'I feel privileged that my child is able to attend such an amazing school, with staff who are highly skilled and so passionate about the pupils and their learning.' One respondent was critical of the school's work in a number of respects. Inspectors are assured that the governing body is already dealing with a complaint from this respondent through the correct procedures.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Frank Wise 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	93	3	7	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	75	10	23	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	66	15	34	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	50	21	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	61	17	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	45	21	42	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	61	16	36	0	0	0	0
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)	12	27	9	20	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	73	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	70	12	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	57	17	39	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	57	18	41	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	82	7	16	1	2	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Frank Wise School, Banbury OX16 9RL

It was a pleasure to meet you when we came to visit your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming. Your school council was very helpful when the members talked to us about your school and what they like about it. You told us that your school is 'fantastic'. We agree! It is what inspectors call 'outstanding' which means that it is one of the very best schools in England.

These are some of the really good things about your school.

- You all learn as well as you possibly can during your time at the school.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You get on very well with everyone.
- You really enjoy learning because your teachers are brilliant at making lessons interesting and giving you work at just the right level for all of you.
- All the adults really care about you and help you to feel safe and happy.
- Your headteacher and all the other people run your school extremely well and know just what to do next to make it even better than it is already.

The school has done a great job in getting the Griffiths Centre up and running for you older students. Now we would like the adults in charge to think about how you can have even more exciting opportunities to go 'out and about' so that more of you can find out what it is like to work, or practise how to live on your own with some help. We know that you will really enjoy this because of all the really good things that you already do which will help you prepare for your future lives ahead.

The inspectors saw that you are all very proud of your school. Keep up the good work in lessons, continue to be the kind and caring pupils that you are and, above all, enjoy your time at Frank Wise School!

With my very best wishes to you for the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Barter

Lead inspector

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