

Bishopswood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123345
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340319
Inspection dates	4–5 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Robson
Headteacher	Jennifer Wager
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed six lessons, seeing four teachers, and observed teaching on all three sites of the school, spending the large majority of their time looking at learning. Meetings were held with staff, a governor and the headteacher of a mainstream school co-located with the primary provision. The inspectors looked at a range of school policies and procedures, data on pupils' achievements, examples of pupils' work and considered the 20 parental questionnaires received.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school has a clear overview of the rates of progress of all pupils in different subjects
- the impact of co-location on the quality of the school's effectiveness
- the impact of leadership and management on the quality of provision on all three sites and the development of the school.

Information about the school

Bishopswood School is an all-age special school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional special needs such as autism, speech, language and communication difficulties, visual and hearing impairments, physical disabilities and medical needs. The school is co-located on three sites shared with mainstream schools. There are two classes on a primary site and two classes on a senior site. On the senior site Bishopswood School has the use of certain facilities that include the playground and grounds, library, hall and dining facilities. On the primary site there is a separate play area and sensory garden.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Bishopswood is a good school where pupils' individual special needs are given careful attention. All pupils benefit in many ways from being at the school. Its uniqueness in being co-located with mainstream nursery, primary and secondary schools is used very effectively to broaden pupils' experiences and ensure that the pupils are fully included in many stimulating and memorable experiences. Parents fully recognise this and, with the exception of only one, expressed very positive views about the school's value to their children.

Pupils make good progress in their learning. Given their significant difficulties understandably this is often only in very small steps, but nevertheless this is very apparent in their success in achieving their targets within their individual education plans. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and personal, social and health education these targets are well linked to nationally expected levels of progress. This process for judging achievement throughout the school does not allow the school to have a clear overview of the rates of progress of individuals and groups of pupils in all subject areas.

Personal development is exceptional and the result of meticulous processes in place to offer excellent care, support and guidance. All staff know pupils very well and detailed care plans address their diverse range of needs extremely well. The quality of teaching and the curriculum further support this because of the excellent planning to offer different activities dependent upon pupils' abilities. The curriculum has a very good balance to its make up. It includes specific time to focus on key skills in areas such as communication and language, as well as work to enhance pupils' personal, social and health needs. Excellent links with other specialist staff, such as therapists, supplement this well.

The school is very well led by a headteacher totally committed to providing the best possible provision for its pupils. She has established a strong staff team, very resilient in their efforts to support each individual child no matter how extreme their needs. Strong leadership at each site ensures that there is a clear level of consistency in the quality of work throughout the school. The school has continued to develop since its previous inspection and has a clear, accurate evaluation of its effectiveness. A detailed development plan further supports the view that the school has the capacity to sustain its improvement. Governors themselves recognise that their involvement is currently satisfactory, but they have started to plan to improve this now that the numbers of governors has recently been increased.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish a better process to gain an overview of the rates of progress of individuals and groups of pupils throughout the school.
- Increase the involvement of governors in monitoring and evaluating the work and effectiveness of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From very low beginnings, pupils clearly develop their skills and increase their levels of understanding to enable them to become more independent. The very good use made of target setting in aspects such as communication, numeracy and personal, social and healthy education enables the school to demonstrate pupils' good progress. Many pupils achieve their termly targets and this leads to the setting of more challenging ones linked to nationally expected levels of progress. However, this system, whilst showing pupils make good progress overall, does not give the school an overview of achievement to be confident that it is similar in all subjects and for the different type of special educational needs groups in the school.

In lessons pupils enjoy the activities and are usually keen to try whatever it is they are asked to do. For example, in a lesson for the older primary pupils they eagerly collected leaves, twigs and bark from a walk in the grounds to then make imitation trees back in class. One higher-ability pupil in the group enthusiastically pointed for the inspector to look at her finished model. Often in lessons pupils are engaged in an individual activity and respond well to this. For example, in the primary class for the youngest pupils all showed good attitudes to learning by happily reading or looking at individual books with an adult, showing a keen awareness of the stories.

Pupils show by their good attendance that they feel safe and enjoy school, which is reflected in observations of them in school. A good start has been made by staff to find ways for pupils to express this. This year pupils have communicated their likes and dislikes at their annual review meetings and these responses are contributing to the activities of the school day. For example, a pupil objected to therapy being during his lunchbreak and this was changed to a more acceptable time.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent, especially at potentially difficult occasions such as lunchtimes when the pupils mix with mainstream pupils. Their understanding of the benefits of being healthy is clearly being extended. This year all achieved the school target of trying a new leisure activity. Many are also willing to experiment far more with their eating. For example, last term one pupil recorded his achievement for the year as 'eating cucumber', a feat extended this term to enjoying a school lunch.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very well supported by the activities in school. For example, visits to different local places of worship and visitors to school of different religious backgrounds have enabled pupils to widen their experiences and awareness of different religions. Home-school books also show how parents record dramatic improvements in their child's ability to access a wider range of experiences

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within the community. Records show that the progress pupils make enables them to be very well prepared for the next stage in their lives when they leave 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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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 level of provision is proving to be very effective in meeting the wide range of special needs of pupils within the school and enables so many to make excellent progress in many aspects of their personal development. Teaching and learning are effective because staff plan activities very carefully and make learning enjoyable. The staff use the positive relationships they have with pupils to plan well for them to enjoy engaging in a wide range of experiences. This was seen in the nursery when the children happily undertook activities related to the topic of blowing, some blowing whistles whilst others blew talcum powder imagining it to be snow. Similarly, a secondary group was seen eagerly preparing for a visit to the local hospital to discover more about how

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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people are helped when they are ill. Some teachers are very clear what they expect pupils to learn in each lesson, but this good practice is not always the case throughout the school.

The curriculum is very well thought out to meet the individual needs of pupils. There is a very strong emphasis on communication, language and developing pupils' independence. The approach taken to make learning interesting for the pupils is well supported by a wide range of activities both in school and on visits, which include residential trips in this country and in Europe. Excellent links with specialists, such as therapists, are interlinked with classroom activities to ensure equality of opportunity for all. The use of information and communication technology is inconsistent but the school development plan shows how this will be developed further this year. Older pupils have good opportunities to achieve external accreditation for their efforts, with one boy this year expected to achieve a silver award in ASDAN.

The exemplary nature of the care, support and guidance offered to pupils is very much appreciated by parents. "I feel blessed to have my child in the hands of such professionals," is a typical comment from parents and carers on how they feel about the school's care. Central to the support process are pupils' detailed care plans and individual education plans. These are used constantly to monitor the progress of pupils and ensure their needs are being met. Learning support assistants play a key role in this. They work closely with individual children and even when pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities can cause extreme physical reactions, they show a strong commitment to ensure positive interventions are put in place to provide effective support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Bishopswood is a well-led school. The headteacher has successfully managed a provision based on three sites with an inevitable wide range of logistical issues to overcome. She has created a very strong staff team all dedicated to doing the best they can to support its pupils. Staff are consulted and performance management is effective. Although, from the staff questionnaire a few support staff are concerned about training opportunities, evidence shows that good opportunities for all staff to develop their skills are available.

Excellent monitoring systems are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of many aspects

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of the school's work. These include very good procedures for curriculum leaders to review their subjects and produce regular reports. These all lead into the development of a detailed school development plan designed to improve the school's effectiveness even further. Whilst it is comprehensive, the plan could benefit from some form of prioritising given the many aspects of its work the school wants to 'fine tune'.

Undoubtedly key strengths of the school lie in the excellent links it has with parents, other schools and other specialist staff. Pupils both from Bishopswood and the mainstream primary and secondary schools where it is co-located benefit enormously from the contact they have with each other. Observing the two groups of pupils existing in such harmony is a reflection of how well the school has managed this process. The links with parents are very strong and, from parental responses, are much appreciated. Many parents support their children in activities in school or on trips. Communication between school and home is regular and evidence shows how this brings about consistency in the approaches taken to support each pupil.

Governors support the school and are keen to celebrate its success. They are not, however, as fully involved in evaluating its effectiveness and, partly through reduced membership, have not had sufficient impact on aspects of its development. For example, they are not as closely involved in the creation of the school development plan or on checking how well pupils are achieving. Good plans exist to extend their involvement. All staff have an excellent awareness of safeguarding issues and the school's procedures are exemplary.

The development of community cohesion has been given a good emphasis throughout the school. A clear overview has been established of how pupils gain an understanding of their own, local and the global communities and a good plan exists to develop this further across the curriculum.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The nursery provision provides children at the Early Years Foundation Stage with an excellent start to their education. It ensures that the assessed needs of all children are being addressed through engaging activities, excellent resources and skilful staff. Children make outstanding progress in all aspects of their learning, benefiting greatly from being with mainstream children. Rigorous initial assessments lead to highly individualised programmes being established. These are followed consistently by staff who ensure that children are always safe and enjoy their learning. By the end of their placements detailed and comprehensive profiles have been created for each child’s transition into a primary school or to move to the primary department of the school. The provision is extremely well led by an exceptional teacher who is highly skilled at ensuring the integrated approach with mainstream is materially beneficial to all children.

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it has had on their children. □My daughter has attended this school since she was two years old and we are very pleased,□ and, □We think Bishopswood is a fantastic school. Our son has really progressed,□ are typical of the comments parents and carers made to the inspectors. Only one parent responded with negative observations and the inspectors could find no evidence to support these views.

Many parents of both Bishopswood and mainstream schools stress the benefits of the co-location of the school with mainstream provision. □The co-location within the mainstream school is fantastic for both the Bishopswood and mainstream children,□ is how one parent expressed this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bishopswood 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 34 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	75	4	20	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	60	7	35	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	70	6	30	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	60	8	40	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	65	6	30	1	5	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)	10	50	8	40	1	50	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	55	8	40	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	60	6	30	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	70	5	25	0	0	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	75	4	20	1	5	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

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.



6 May 2010

Inspection of Bishopswood School, Sonning Common RG49RJ

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for being so helpful when I came to your school recently. I know only a few of you will be able to read this letter, so I hope your parents and staff at school will help the rest of you. I very much enjoyed my time in the school because you all made me very welcome. You were all extremely polite and well behaved.

I think your school is good. I can see you enjoy being in school and that all the staff work very hard to help you. You do especially well in improving your ability to do things for yourself. The school is excellent at finding out your strengths and weaknesses and using this information to plan how to best help you. Staff work very well with your parents and the therapists to support you. It is also really good that you are at school alongside other pupils in primary and secondary schools.

The school is very well led by your headteacher. She has developed a staff team who all work together very effectively. This means that throughout the school there are lots of good things that happen.

To help it be even better I have made two small suggestions to the school, which I hope your parents will help you understand.

- Find more ways to know you are all doing well with your work.
- Make sure the governors are more involved in supporting the school.

Keep working hard and doing your best to help the school.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Hackett

Lead inspector

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