

Brimble Hill Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126556
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	340998
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Easter
Headteacher	Alison Paul
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed. Eleven teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at data concerning pupils' progress, the school development plan, reports from the School Improvement Partner, governing body minutes and a range of other documentation. Twenty responses to the parental questionnaire were received.

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

- the information provided about pupils' progress through assessment and the tracking of attainment
- the impact of the extensive range of partnerships on the pupils' progress and well-being
- the quality and impact of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
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Information about the school

All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Pupils have a range of needs including autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British origin and their home language is English, but about 20% are from a range of other ethnic heritages. The school admits children to the Early Years Foundation Stage throughout the year. These children are taught in a mixed Nursery and Reception class and a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Since the last inspection, pupils with increasingly complex learning difficulties have been admitted to the school. The current headteacher has been in post for one year and the current senior leadership team was formed at that time. Over the last year, three members of staff have been on maternity leave, meaning that one third of the current teaching staff is temporary.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Brimble Hill provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is particularly successful in actively promoting pupils' well-being and personal development through good care, guidance and support. Parents and carers are very pleased with the way the children are nurtured and supported. The relatively new headteacher and leadership team have rightly identified the need to exploit the success of the school in helping pupils to be happy, safe and relaxed, to enable them to make better progress. At present, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Over time, pupils make progress similar to that of their peers nationally. In lessons, progress is slower when planning does not show clearly enough what each pupil is expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. This causes a lack of focus and reduces learning. Where planning is specific, for example in the Nursery/Reception class, progress in lessons is consistently good or better. This, together with a very well-planned curriculum, makes provision for Nursery children outstanding.

Teachers and other adults manage pupils well in lessons and throughout the day. As a result, behaviour is good. Most pupils are keen to do as they are asked and show, within their capabilities, a developing sense of right and wrong. Pupils with greater behavioural difficulties are sensitively helped to gain self-control. Pupils show empathy for each other, often supporting each other or showing concern when a classmate is distressed. Pupils clearly enjoy school and many show excitement about new experiences as well as familiar activities. In many situations, pupils benefit from the high level of adult support available. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well and relationships are very positive. There are occasions, however, when pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to learn to become independent.

Good partnerships mean the school offers pupils a wealth of opportunities linked to their personal needs and disabilities, such as trampolining, music and multi-sensory activities as well as a range of therapies including speech and physiotherapy. Pupils are given good opportunities to relate learning in school to the real world through visits out, and visitors to, the school. These are successful aspects of curricular provision, although their impact is lessened because the curriculum is not yet fully coordinated and focused on supporting better pupils' progress. The school has already begun to develop a new curriculum which aims to correct this. Of late, work has begun to improve the use of assessment in school. This is helping teachers to be more precise about what pupils have achieved and what they need to learn next. Targets are set, but pupils' attainments are not checked on sufficiently often to ensure that they are moving towards these at sufficient pace throughout the year.

The new leadership team has correctly identified aspects of the school in need of

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improvement and has begun work to achieve this. Accurate school self-evaluation and the improvements seen thus far, including the improvement of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the developments in assessment and curriculum, demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. School improvement planning does not, however, show enough short-term goals and milestones to ensure that the speed of improvement is accelerated and maintained. Governors are very supportive and, where they have good information, proactive in discussing issues before decisions are made. However, they do not have sufficient information about pupils' progress, or the first-hand knowledge to put this into context, to allow them to fully hold the school to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve rates of progress by:
 - identifying what each pupil is expected to achieve by the end of each lesson or activity
 - developing the use of data tracking so that pupils' progress towards annual targets is monitored regularly throughout the year
 - ensuring the new school curriculum is designed so that it is fully coordinated and focused on supporting pupils' progress.
- Improve the impact of school self-evaluation by:
 - setting short-term targets and milestones against which to measure school improvement
 - ensuring governors have sufficient first-hand knowledge of the school and information about pupils' progress to enable them to fully hold the school to account.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to develop independence.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Although pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities mean that they do not reach the levels of pupils of a similar age nationally, they make satisfactory academic progress. Pupils with additional needs, encompassing those with autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties, are fully included and make progress similar to others in the school. Pupils of different ethnicities achieve as well as all other pupils. Pupils gain important personal skills, for instance learning to make choices. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils showed the ability to choose whether they wanted to play a treasure hunt game, paint or role play being at the seaside. Within their capabilities, they learn to adopt healthy lifestyles, enjoying activity and making healthy choices at snack times. Pupils' confidence in the

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adults who work with them shows they feel safe and secure. They are very willing to seek help when they have a need. In a trampolining lesson, pupils were clearly enjoying the activity because they knew they were fully supported by adults. Pupils make a contribution to the life of the school in a variety of ways, from helping to carry registers to the office or tidying the classroom to simply smiling when they see familiar adults. In some lessons, however, adults' anxiety to ensure pupils are able to successfully complete activities restricts independence. This lack of independence limits the contribution some could make in school or in deciding how they could best improve their skills. Outcomes, in terms of good behaviour and the care shown for others, demonstrate pupils' good moral, social and spiritual development. Pupils have more limited opportunity to learn about diversity and difference and so their cultural development is only satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching lacks consistency in its impact on learning because planning does not always show clearly enough the individualised purpose of a lesson or activity. However, a mix of an increasingly appropriate curriculum and more targeted teaching is helping provision improve, particularly in Key Stage 1. During the day, these younger pupils are given the opportunity to learn to choose between activities as well as having short periods of intensive teaching. This practice is gradually spreading through the school. There remains, however, inconsistency in the way all activities are targeted towards clearly defined individualised outcomes. The school includes within its teaching time snack time and lunch time. While this is perfectly appropriate and helps pupils gain social skills, the time is not as well used as it should be to promote a wider range of progress. There is good focus on the development of pupils' communication skills. The assessment of their needs is accurate so each is equipped with an appropriate means to communicate. The development of these skills is not yet consistent across the school. The best practice seen was when teachers used activities throughout the day to promote and develop the individual communication skills of each pupil.

New systems for monitoring and recording pupils' progress are spreading throughout the school, but are better established for younger pupils, where teachers use a good range of strategies including focused and incidental observations to help ensure that subsequent activities present suitable challenge. The school gives very successful time, thought and effort to ensure that each pupil is nurtured and safeguarded. Careful assessment of pupils' personal and social needs is used to provide specialist support where needed.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The relatively new headteacher and leadership team have worked together to establish accurate priorities for improvement. Actions already taken to improve progress are showing positive effect, especially for younger pupils. The majority of teaching staff are supportive of changes being made and are working hard to support the improvement work. Some other staff are, however, finding the changes more challenging and the school is correct in its plans to establish better communication with the various staff groups to ensure full support. Governors are vigilant in seeing that statutory duties are

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met. There is careful budgeting which enables the school to be very well staffed and to have a wide range of resources. Governors do not, however, have sufficient first-hand knowledge of the day-to-day life of the school to help them support and challenge to maximum effect. The school's focus on meeting the personal needs of each individual through its wide range of activities, support and therapy means that equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. There is very careful and successful safeguarding of pupils, for example, through rigorous risk assessments and very close attention to site safety. The school has established good links with other schools, agencies and support services. This helps promote the development and well-being of Brimble Hill pupils, but is also providing valuable support for some pupils in the neighbouring mainstream school. The school has good strategies to help promote community cohesion particularly at a school level. However, much of this work is at an informal level and so it is difficult to evaluate the impact or to identify where there is scope for 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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for Nursery children is outstanding. An extremely well-planned, well-balanced curriculum means that children, whatever their level of need, progress well and learn to adapt to and enjoy school. Activities provide the children with excellent opportunities to learn through working directly with adults, to practise what they have learned and to further their own interests. Good teaching is evident from teachers and teaching assistants alike. There is a particular strength in the high expectations held for each child at all times. The provision for Reception children is more mixed, but work to

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share and spread good practice is rapidly having an impact so all are now making good progress. Assessment processes are robust and provide detailed information about each child. This enables subtle adult interventions so that each child is precisely challenged. The provision has been greatly improved over the last year, demonstrating the success of its leadership. The good links with parents and carers reassures them that their children are safe and secure at Brimble Hill.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the education their child receives. This was summed up by a parent who wrote, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds since attending this school. She is more confident. She enjoys coming to school. My experience of this school is a great one.' The only negative comments received were from parents and carers who would like the school to have a website. Development of this is already in hand and a website should be up and running in the near future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brimble Hill Special 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 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	60	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	60	8	40	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)	8	40	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	55	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	50	10	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	65	7	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	80	4	20	0	0	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.



25 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Brimble Hill Special School, Swindon, SN25 2NB

We really enjoyed our time at your school and would like to thank you for your friendly welcome, especially all the smiles. It was great to see how much you enjoy coming to school and to see how well you behave. You are very friendly, cheerful and polite, and helped us feel at home in your school.

When we visited your lessons, we could see that you enjoy your learning and that you are keen to help each other. You are also doing well in learning how to work together, to help each other and how to keep healthy and safe. All the adults who work with you take great care of you and want you to do your best. We were particularly pleased to see how well the youngest children in your school are helped to settle in and to learn.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We have asked the school to make sure that staff know exactly what they want you to gain from each of your lessons and activities. All through the year, we would like them to check that you are getting closer to meeting your targets. We have also asked that everything you do during the school year is carefully planned to help you make good progress. We also want the school to make sure it gets better as quickly as it can by checking its progress in making improvements more regularly. We have asked for you to be given the chance to become more independent.

We will take away good memories of your school and the time we spent with you.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Onions

Lead Inspector

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