

The Bicknell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130390
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	341040
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Marchiori
Headteacher	Brian Hooper
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at policy documents, planning information, and external reports. Although there were no parental questionnaires received, the inspectors looked at past questionnaires from parents, as well as a number of staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with more complex needs
- the quality of academic guidance for all pupils
- the extent to which pupils enjoy their education, particularly whether they attend well.

Information about the school

The Bicknell School is part of the Bournemouth Alternative Needs Federation and provides education and support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A few of the pupils have additional complex needs such as autism. The school provides support to pupils who are at risk of exclusion in nearby schools.

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

The Bicknell School is successful in providing its pupils with a good education while giving them outstanding personal care, guidance and support. Youngsters join the school having experienced significant difficulties in mainstream education, often resulting in high absence, low attainment and resultant poor self-esteem. The school does well in helping the pupils to get back on track. Their attendance starts to recover, they begin to enjoy learning, and almost all pupils go on to achieve creditable results leading to worthwhile further education programmes or careers.

The executive headteacher and his senior team, through their unquestionable commitment and drive, play a key role in ensuring the success of the school. Their strong leadership ensures that the school's calm ethos provides the pupils with the constant reassurance and security they need. This allows them to settle down to meaningful work and to develop close relationships with their fellow pupils and with staff. There is palpable gentleness and respect between all the people who work, teach and learn at the Bicknell School. There is excellent individual support for the pupils, who quickly develop a very good understanding of what they should do if they feel troubled or angry. Pupils say that there are plenty of people whom they trust and to whom they can turn in a moment of crisis. As one pupil said, 'When you have a problem, tutors are really good at sitting down with you and getting you calm. They're very understanding, and you feel you can talk about anything.' As a consequence of this high degree of trust and the staff's skilful classroom management, pupils' behaviour is outstanding.

The leadership team has put good systems in place, such as regular lesson observations and good data analysis, so that the school is able to evaluate its own performance accurately. This concise evaluation forms a solid basis for improving staff and pupil performance, and for planning future developments. It shows that the school has good capacity to sustain further improvement. Teaching is generally of good quality throughout the school and has resulted in good academic progress in all subjects, particularly in mathematics. Not all teachers are equally skilful at ensuring that there is a precise match between activities and resources in lessons, and the needs and capabilities of all the pupils. This holds back the achievement of a small number of pupils. The school makes very good use of targets to improve pupils' behaviour and other aspects of their personal development. Learning targets are in place for pupils, but not all pupils have a clear idea of what their own targets are or what they have to do next to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that all pupils know what they need to do next in order to improve by having a clear understanding of their individual targets.
- Ensure that all teachers provide lesson activities and resources that closely match the needs and capabilities of all the learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils join the school often disenchanted with education and learning, and many have missed a lot of schooling. This means that standards are below the national average. However, once they join the school, their self-confidence in the classroom very quickly returns, their behaviour improves enormously and they make good academic progress. Achievement for all pupils, including those with more complex needs, is therefore good overall. One of the key elements to this rapid improvement is that pupils feel themselves to be the focus of very individualised attention, encouragement and support. In their examinations, almost all pupils gain good results, and there is no discernible difference in the achievement of the different gender or other groups at the school, including those pupils with more complex needs.

The pupils recognise that the school is a place where their feelings matter and where their opinions and views are respected. They find that they enjoy being in the classroom. Almost every pupil's attendance improves, in many cases spectacularly. A very small number of pupils, who were virtual non-attenders at their previous schools, have not been able to improve their attendance despite the school's best efforts. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although the school accurately recognises that it has more to do in cultivating pupils' cultural development. There is outstanding improvement in pupils' behaviour, and disruption in the classroom is minimal. Classrooms are cordial and good-humoured environments for learning. Pupils behave considerately and kindly to the staff and to each other, freely offering help when they see it is needed.

Pupils all say that the school and its staff make them feel very safe. They know that there are calm and regular routines to deal with any pupils who are becoming upset. There is no bullying. They fully trust that staff will act in their interests if necessary. Pupils are very good at taking on board the friendly advice about how to stay healthy and keep fit. The number of smokers in the school has decreased dramatically to just a few as the pupils take up the opportunities offered for patches and programmes of assistance. One typical comment from pupils was, 'They're really good at helping you be healthy. We get bags of fruit from the tuck shop, and everyone's getting loads of exercise.'

Pupils take up opportunities with alacrity to help in the local community, for example by helping out with drama and cycling proficiency in a primary school. The primary headteacher wrote, 'Your pupil's conduct with us has been exemplary. She is an excellent ambassador for the school who has made an invaluable contribution.' With the help of the school, pupils accumulate the skills they will need for the next stage of their lives. They make good progress in the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and information

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and communication technology. Pupils attend interesting college courses, for example in dance and construction. They undertake work experience in a very wide range of settings including supermarkets, garages and an outdoor education centre.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Classrooms are calm and well organised. Classroom staff provide the pupils with the right balance of praise, reassurance and guidance so that they feel secure and confident and can develop independence in their learning. Teachers carefully choose activities that will appeal to the pupils and use good motivational techniques that will help them to regain a love of learning. One teacher rewards the pupils who have worked hard with 'monopoly' money that can be exchanged for healthy snacks. Another has a box with mysterious contents that will only be opened at the end of a lesson by a person of the pupils' choosing. Pupils learn well because of an invigorating selection of both practical and mental activities. Most teachers skilfully match lesson tasks and reading materials to meet the different levels of need in the class to make sure that everyone's learning is moving forward at a quick pace. One or two teachers are not yet quite so skilful at this

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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and this may hold a few pupils back. Most teachers use daily assessment well within the very small groups to explore where pupils are and what they need to do next. They work well alongside the pupils to set relevant individual targets for priority skills, such as literacy and numeracy. Marking is informative and offers good guidance for improvement. For a few pupils there is insufficient emphasis on learning targets within lessons and this means that they do not have a clear understanding of how to achieve these targets quickly.

The school has worked hard and successfully to ensure that the curriculum is personalised, flexible and very rich. It focuses well on the skills and personal characteristics the pupils will require for their future well-being. The senior staff have developed very strong relationships with other local education providers, including colleges and the grammar school, to provide an even broader range of opportunities for the youngsters. The curriculum is particularly strong in its emphasis on social, cooperative and team building skills that are taught through a variety of enrichment activities, such as the residential visit, weekly outdoor pursuits and work with the Prince's Trust.

The pupils, together with their families, receive excellent personal support that helps them to rebuild their personal lives so that they will continue to flourish and mature. Pupils speak very fondly of all the staff and how much they help them. A typical comment from one pupil was, 'The teachers here are really good. They always make the time to listen to you, and make you feel as though you're worth something.'

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The governors, the executive headteacher and his team are very committed to the task of setting pupils back on the right track. Their leadership has brought about some excellent personal outcomes for the pupils, leading to good academic progress. The school has ensured that there are good management systems in place to enable this to happen. Senior staff clearly identify areas for development for staff through the regular monitoring of lessons. The leadership team assiduously tracks each pupil's attainment, and there is accurate monitoring of pupils' learning. Results are analysed meticulously to see if there is any variation between gender, age or ability groups, although there are relatively small numbers. This means that the school can be absolutely certain that there is no discrimination or inequality. Through good monitoring and analysis, the senior staff

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and governors are able to determine accurately overall priorities and to drive the school forwards. The school has very robust safeguarding procedures and all statutory requirements are met. The governing body effectively holds the school to account by providing good support and challenge to the leadership team.

As part of a federation, the school plays a very important part in promoting inclusion within the local authority. There is a fully developed outreach service that supports pupils with severe behavioural difficulties in both primary and secondary mainstream schools. The school also works very effectively alongside mainstream schools to provide alternative programmes for pupils who are at risk of failing. These excellent partnerships have resulted in a sharp drop in the number of pupils who have been excluded throughout the local authority, so preserving and increasing their chances of success in later life. The executive headteacher has gained national recognition for his work in coaching and supporting headteachers and leadership teams. Under his leadership, the school provides intensive, welcome support to other schools throughout the south of England.

The school has carried out a useful audit about the extent to which it promotes community cohesion. Implementation of the recommendations, although satisfactory, is still at an early stage, although there are some good outcomes within the school and the local community. For example, the pupils organise and hold regular coffee mornings for local residents and business people. They undertake conservation work at a nearby beauty spot and undertake litter picks.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Past comments from parents confirm that families feel that they share a strong partnership with the school, feel fully involved in decisions about their children and know what they have to do at home to assist progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bicknell 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 no completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 63 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	0	0	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)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	0	0	0	0	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 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.



8 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Bicknell School, Bournemouth, BH7 6QP

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school recently, and a special thanks to those of you who came and spoke to me as a group. I was very impressed by your confidence and frankness in our discussion. You were a credit to your school.

This is what we found out about your school.

- The school provides you with a good education and almost all of you make very good improvement especially in your behaviour and attendance.
- Your teachers do a good job of teaching you so that you gain good results in your exams.
- The staff give you excellent personal support so that you feel very safe, develop your self-confidence, work hard and make the right decisions, especially in leading a healthy life.
- The curriculum is excellent and gives you all the things you need to move on to the next stage of your lives.
- Those in charge do a good job in leading and managing the school.

There are a couple of things that we have asked the school to do to make things even better.

- Ensure that you all know your individual learning targets and how to reach them quickly.
- Ensure that all the activities in lessons are matched exactly to the needs of every one of you.

Perhaps you could help by thinking of ways in which you could achieve your targets more quickly.

I wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Mick Megee

Lead Inspector

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