

# Culverhill School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131808
<b>Local Authority</b>	South Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341224
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Charles Hackett

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Keith Lawrence
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Kelston Close Yate Bristol BS37 8SZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils, parents and the speech and language therapist attached to the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning, governors meetings' minutes and data on pupils' achievements.

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

- The evidence on the learning and progress of pupils with different special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Whether the curriculum meets the different needs of all groups and ages of pupils in the school.
- The impact of the emphasis on shared leadership and management on the outcomes for pupils and the quality of provision.
- How effective care, support and guidance procedures are in supporting the individual needs of all pupils and ensuring equality of opportunity and positive outcomes for all pupils.

## Information about the school

Culverhill caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most have moderate learning difficulties with additional disabilities such as autistic spectrum disorders, specific and complex learning needs and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Given the extent to which the special educational needs of many of the pupils restrict their cognitive abilities, this inspection report does not include a grade for attainment in relation to all schools. A small proportion of pupils are in the care of the local authority and a few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The school achieved specialist status for communication and interaction from September of this year.

**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

Culverhill is an outstanding special school where pupils receive excellent levels of care and attention. Inspired by a highly committed headteacher and strong senior leadership team, there is a real drive and commitment from the whole staff team for the school to do its very best for each pupil. Pupils are treated as individuals, ensured equality of opportunity to achieve and given highly effective support and guidance. This is leading to all groups of pupils making good progress and in some cases making outstanding achievements. These include some of last year's Year 11 pupils making such exceptional progress in mathematics that they progressed from very low starting points to passing GCSEs. Similarly in sport, examples of outstanding achievement include pupils recently representing Great Britain in Judo competitions for the disabled and a pupil winning a regional BMX biking competition.

Pupils' enjoyment of being in school is shown by above-average attendance figures. This enjoyment is also shown by pupils' willingness to engage in a wide range of activities and their excellent behaviour both in and out of school. At the time of the previous inspection poor behaviour was leading to frequent exclusions. This situation is now much improved, no permanent exclusions have been issued for over two years and the use of short fixed-term exclusions is very rare.

Safety procedures are extremely rigorous and much thought is given to promoting pupils' well-being in potentially difficult situations. For example, excellent support programmes are proving very useful in reducing pupils' vulnerability when using the internet. A key feature of the school is the involvement of pupils in both the school and local community. The school council members confirm that they are listened to and feel their opinions are valued by staff.

The quality of teaching is leading to all pupils irrespective of their special educational needs and/or disabilities making at least good progress. Excellent relationships and effective use of teaching assistants ensures that each classroom is an exciting learning environment where pupils are eager to learn. Information and communication technology is used very well and topics are often made exciting by visits and visitors to school. The only downside is that occasionally teachers spend too long addressing the whole-class group without recognising and adapting their approach to allow for the different ability levels and preferred learning styles of the pupils.

Considerable thought has been given to ensuring that the curriculum gives all pupils equal opportunities to succeed, and this results in the many positive outcomes there are for all groups and ages of pupils. For example, older pupils enjoy an extensive range of opportunities to be involved in practical activities such as horticulture, enrichment trips

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and enterprise projects. These have successfully prepared them to take vocational college courses when they leave or in a few cases move directly into employment.

An important strength of the school is the very effective ways it works with parents and other professionals to support each pupil. For example, the speech and language specialist liaises very effectively with teachers to provide individual programmes for pupils, which are then seamlessly embedded into the whole curriculum. The successful planning of this has contributed to the school gaining its specialist status.

This is now adding to the high quality of provision in this area. Similarly excellent links with the Connexion service are very effective in planning the transitions for pupils when they come to leave school. This leads to all leavers knowing and being well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Excellent self-evaluation systems are in place to enable the school to identify areas in need of further development. This in turn has led to the sustained improvement evident since the school's previous inspection and the school demonstrating excellent value for money and capacity for further improvement. The climate of encouragement that exists in the school means pupils' needs are given the highest possible priority. Rigorous monitoring procedures and in-depth analysis of pupil's achievements are commonplace. The school's specialist status is already improving provision; for example, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have now been provided with a laptop. Pupils from other schools are already receiving specialist support from school staff and additional further work as part of the specialist status is planned with other schools. This is part of the school's aspiration to be a centre of excellence in the authority for communication and interaction.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that over the next term teachers always take account of the different abilities of pupils and their preferred learning styles when talking to whole-class groups.

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

**1**

Pupils' learning is good in a large majority of lessons. Positive relationships with staff mean that pupils enjoy the many activities they engage in. For example, Year 8 pupils in a design and technology lesson were clearly pleased with their efforts as they completed their practical project of making a small box. Similarly in a physical education lesson, Year 9 pupils enthusiastically put together dance sequences in small groups demonstrating key aspects of friendships. In a design and technology cookery lesson Year 10 pupils showed how well they can work independently very well and that all have a good understanding of the importance of safe working practices.

Detailed records show that from low starting points the vast majority of pupils make good or outstanding progress. The school has regularly assessed the data on pupils' progress against nationally collated sample data for similar schools and these consistently put the progress of Culverhill pupils well above the average level. Progress

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for the different special educational needs and/or disability groups in the school are relatively similar, although pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make less progress than others in writing. Understandably pupils with autistic spectrum disorders achieve less well in aspects of personal and social education that involve them working with others.

Pupils' good achievements in literacy and mathematics, together with completing work experience placements and vocational courses, make important contributions to pupils making excellent progress in preparing for their future economic well-being. These in turn also have consistently assisted pupils to move on successfully to further education or employment placements.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They enjoy the two hours of physical education on offer each week and many join the lunch and after-school clubs. During the inspection a popular dance session was observed where pupils were energetically performing popular dance routines.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority and the excellent improvements to behaviour and their social skills are testament to the effectiveness of this. Spiritual and cultural opportunities have recently been audited and plans put in place to extend these even further.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In almost all the lessons observed teaching was good and the management of pupils excellent. Teachers know the pupils well and make effective use of teaching assistants to provide individual help for pupils as required. Good use of information technology helps maintain the interests of pupils. This was the case in a personal, social and health education lesson where pupils went through a sequence of photographs of events using an interactive whiteboard. They were able to discuss in depth what they thought were the feelings and emotions of individuals in a group of children looking to be having an argument with each other.

Teachers use questioning well to check on pupils' progress and to inform further class discussions. Information gained from this and other assessments of pupils' achievements are also used well to inform individual targets for pupils. These are carefully reviewed, and the achievement of each is used to demonstrate pupils' progress. Lesson-planning recognises the different abilities of pupils but occasionally teachers talk to the whole class for too long. This can mean that more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged or lower-ability pupils are not given the support needed to fully understand the activity or topic.

The school offers a very relevant curriculum designed to enable all pupils to achieve. Support for pupils' emotional well-being is embedded in work throughout the curriculum. For pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 there is a very effective emphasis on addressing pupils' language and communication difficulties, with lots of opportunities for pupils to practise newly acquired skills. The achievement of specialist school status demonstrates the high aspirations of the school to support pupil's communication and interaction. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 have excellent opportunities to gain external forms of accreditation, as well as follow a wide range of vocational opportunities. These, together with the many lunchtime and after-school clubs, are all highly effective at developing pupils' social skills, increasing their levels of independence and ensuring that they enjoy their education.

The excellent quality of care, support and guidance is such that parents are almost all unanimous in stating how well they feel their children are being helped. The school's work with parents, carers and other agencies to enable pupils to achieve as well as they do is deeply embedded in everything the school does. When pupils face difficult situations, records show that the school reacts promptly to ensure that the right level of support is made available.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The excellent, positive impact of leadership and management on provision has clearly demonstrated the excellent capacity the school has to sustain and develop even further its effectiveness. The senior staff team will not allow the school to rest on its laurels and ensure that it is constantly seeking to bring about further improvements. For example, although teaching is good, further work is being done with the aim of seeking to make it even more effective. All staff are fully involved in the development of the school through working parties that focus on different aspects of the school's work.

Equality of opportunity is given a priority and there are no forms of discrimination tolerated. Pupils' progress is very carefully monitored and where it appears to be less than good, interventions are quickly put in place. The headteacher and her senior staff ensure that the improvement targets set for each pupil are challenging and that there is good provision in place to enable them to achieve these.

The safeguarding of pupils is given a very high priority. Pupils, themselves, report that they feel safe and know that staff are there to support them if they have a concern. Child protection procedures are very thorough and stringent risk assessments are in place. Governors play an important part in ensuring that health and safety procedures are fully in place.

Governors also make other impressive contributions to the effectiveness of the school. They know the school well through rigorous monitoring of its performance and are regular visitors to school, known well by staff and pupils. On each visit they complete brief reports and feed these back to other governors, which ensures that all have a first-rate understanding of the work and effectiveness of the school.

The school plays an important part in the community. For example, pupils have recently been involved in planning a local playground and joined in with the link the community has with another country. Each Friday, in conjunction with a local primary school, the school runs a caf  open to the public. These positive features are now being extended through a detailed community cohesion plan which, when fully in place, will provide pupils with a wide range of excellent experiences.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	<b>1</b>
	1



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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Over 90% of the parental responses received made positive statements about all but one of the statements in the questionnaire. 'I am pleased with all aspects of the school' is the view expressed by one parent, fully supported by almost all other parents. Many express appreciation for the efforts of all staff in providing their children with support and positive experiences that have raised their children's self-esteem. 'We believe this is as a result of the whole school experience from the headteacher, class teacher, teaching assistants and dinner ladies' stressed one parent.

Only 5 out of the 41 responses included a negative mark or comment. The inspectors found no evidence to support these. For example, two of these felt the school did not prepare their child well for the future. Evidence suggests this is not the case, as supported by the positive transitions for pupils when they come to leave school. Two others felt the school does not help them to support their child's learning. Evidence shows that parents are invited into school, shown how their children are progressing, given ideas of tasks to complete at home and receive regular communication from staff.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Culverhill 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 inspector received 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 128 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	61	14	34	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	63	15	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	59	16	39	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	49	19	46	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	56	16	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	51	17	41	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	41	22	54	1	2	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)	18	44	17	41	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	46	21	51	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	46	20	49	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	41	22	54	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	51	17	41	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	61	14	34	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Culverhill School, Yate, BS37 8SZ

Thank you for being so friendly when Mr King and I visited recently. We both very much enjoyed meeting you and hearing all the good things you had to say about the school. You helped us decide that Culverhill is an outstanding school, where you achieve well and the teaching is good.

The headteacher and all the staff make sure you get an excellent education. They help you enjoy being at school and ensure that you are safe. All the many activities mean that you have lots of chances to achieve well. We also know that you make important contributions to the success of the school by putting forward ideas and doing lots of things in the community.

There is just one important aspect we have suggested to your teachers that could be better. We want them to always make sure that they do not talk for too long to you all in a big group as this sometimes makes it difficult for a few of you to understand what is happening, and for a few others it does not always challenge them to do their best work.

I hope this letter helps you know about the report, but remember you can always talk about it at home or in school if you need help understanding some parts of it.

Keep working hard.

Yours faithfully

Charles Hackett

Lead Inspector

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