

Mount Gilbert School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132122
Local Authority	Telford And Wrekin
Inspection number	341291
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Eric Craven HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Stevens
Headteacher	Angela Valentini
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with the acting chair of governors, a group of pupils, staff, representatives from the local authority, the school improvement partner and the parents of two pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's policies, planning and monitoring records as well as information about the progress being made by pupils. Questionnaires were returned by 10 parents, 14 pupils and 10 staff.

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

- the work of the school in tackling the poor attendance of some pupils
- the effectiveness of the school in promoting good behaviour and dealing with difficult behaviour
- how governors are playing their part in school improvement
- the school's tracking of pupil progress
- improvements to the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

The school serves the area of Telford and Wrekin and also provides places for a few pupils from a neighbouring local authority. Although the school provides for girls there are none on roll currently. All of the pupils have statements of special educational needs because of their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and some pupils have additional needs such as moderate learning difficulties. All of the pupils are of White British origin. Very few are in the care of the local authority. A little over half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupils are referred to the school throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and only seven have been at the school for more than two years. The school has suffered from significant staff absence over the past half-term mainly because of illness. At one point this was so extensive that on the advice of health professionals the school closed for three and half days.

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

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. This is an improving school and there are some good elements to its work. Staff absence over the past half term has put a brake on the improvements the school has been making since the last inspection. As a consequence, based on the school's own evidence, the behaviour of the pupils and the quality of teaching, although satisfactory, are not quite as good as they were in the summer term 2009. Nevertheless, the school has improved since its last inspection and has dealt effectively with the four identified areas for development.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other well. They are driving improvement firmly and have established a healthy ethos at the school. As a result the school now rightly puts learning first and behaviour second on its agenda. The school checks on its effectiveness well and has plans that demonstrate that leaders know its strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence the capacity for the school to regain the improvements recently lost and to develop further is satisfactory. Although there are some pupils who misbehave most know how to behave appropriately and do so for most of the time. They appreciate right from wrong. There is some bullying but most pupils say this is tackled swiftly and decisively by staff. In the main parents agree and those who returned the questionnaire were unanimous in their positive views of the school. The quality of teaching is varied and ranges from outstanding to a little that is inadequate but, overall, it is sound. The progress the pupils make in lessons mirrors this picture and pupils make rapid progress in the best lessons. The main reasons why a few lessons are not up to scratch are, firstly, because emerging behaviour difficulties are not dealt with firmly and swiftly and escalate to a point where other pupils' learning is disrupted. Secondly, despite them having targets in their subjects, work is not planned sufficiently well to meet the individual needs of pupils. On the other hand the best lessons are vibrant and pacy and capture the pupils' interests and, as a result, they are keen to get down to work.

Pupils have a good appreciation of how to live healthy and safe lives although some do not always choose to fully apply this knowledge from day to day. In many respects the pupils are prepared well for leaving school and for their future economic well-being. However one significant drawback in this area is the rate of attendance, which is too low. The school is applying a range of strategies to raise this and is having good successes with some pupils. However, some are intransigent and hard to reach despite these efforts and their attendance remains stubbornly and unacceptably low. The staff care for, guide and support the pupils well and safeguarding arrangements are sound. There are timely interventions for those who need additional support. The school's own support teams are effectively bolstered by outside personnel. For example, the school

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nurse provides good support on health matters through a drop-in facility for pupils. There are good opportunities for pupils to make a contribution to the school and the wider community and they take these on enthusiastically. The school council plays its part well, even interviewing prospective candidates for teaching and non-teaching posts. The school's promotion of community cohesion is sound but hampered by there being a single culture within the school. Suitable efforts are being made to broaden the pupils' experience of other cultures but it is too early to see the full impact of these. The curriculum is good despite the lack of a modern foreign language on the timetable. The school has stopped teaching of a modern foreign language temporarily due to staffing difficulties. The curriculum has been tailored to meet the needs and interests of the pupils and they find this interesting and motivating. Because the outcomes for pupils are satisfactory the school achieves sound value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of attendance by working closely with the local authority and other agencies to target hard to reach pupils and families where attendance is below 70% and is often compounded by social difficulties.
 - Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good by:
 - making sure all lesson plans include suitable targets for individuals and groups of pupils matched closely to their needs
 - making sure that all teachers respond swiftly, decisively and in accord with agreed procedures when behaviour problems emerge in lessons.
 - Reintroduce a modern foreign language to the curriculum.
- 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 there are a few pupils who reach average national standards, pupils' attainment is generally low, most often because of the difficulties and disruptions they have experienced in their education. This masks the fact that attainment has nevertheless improved since the last inspection and pupils are increasingly achieving a wider range and higher grades in external examinations. The progress they make from their starting points when they arrive at the school is satisfactory. In 2008/09 the rate of progress in English improved, partly in response to the school's general emphasis on literacy and boy's writing in particular. A similar rate of progress was made in information and communication technology (ICT) but slower progress was made in mathematics and science. The pupils made sound progress overall in the lessons observed during the inspection and some made excellent progress when they were fully involved, making contributions and concentrating, and when behaviour was fully under control. When pupils found lessons to be irrelevant and uninteresting they tended to

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switch off and become distracted and in some cases behaviour problems then emerged. As a consequence the progress they made was limited.

The behaviour of the pupils has improved substantially over time but has been adversely affected by staff absence over the past half term. This has unsettled the pupils and has disjointed their education. Staffing is now stable and there are signs that the school is recovering recent lost ground.

As well as the inspection questionnaires, other information held by the school about parents' views supports their positive view about the outcomes for their children. One parent, reflecting the view of the majority said, 'It's good to see him so happy at school and I'm glad I chose this school to be honest.' Nevertheless, not all parents are fully in agreement that the school deals effectively with behaviour problems. The pupils say they enjoy being at this school much more than others they have previously attended. They particularly enjoy the opportunities they are given to choose activities and undertake off-site learning.

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	4
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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

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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The quality of teaching has improved but staff absence has resulted in inconsistent teaching and has delayed planned training to improve teaching further. As a result, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are competent at gauging the levels at which the pupils are working. Senior staff know that the next step is for teachers to make better use of this information in planning work for the pupils.

The curriculum is good. It has been developed with a close eye on how it can hook pupils into learning. Interesting ways of delivering the knowledge, skills and understanding the pupils need have been devised. For example, during the inspection, one classroom was prepared as a crime scene to promote literacy and in another modular course pupils were discussing the plot of a film they would make. The school is aware that it needs to teach a modern foreign language and intends to re-introduce this when staffing is at full complement. The school enlivens the curriculum well by using off-site visits, including residential experiences and there is a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities including football, ICT, games and a homework club.

There is good support for pupils with additional needs from the school's Assessment and Intervention Team. Pupils all know they have behaviour targets as well as targets in each of their subjects and they play their part in reviewing these every six weeks. All have opportunities to attend their annual reviews. Older pupils are clear about their pathways beyond school because they are guided well.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is becoming increasingly systematic in monitoring and reviewing its work. Lesson observations and checks on planning are regular occurrences and feedback to teachers helpfully influences next steps. The views of parents and pupils are taken into account when plans are formulated. The school improvement plan is a useful working document that is guiding the school effectively. Data are marshalled well and are progressively being used to good effect. Subject leaders have completed audits of their areas of responsibility and subsequent action plans have been prepared. The questionnaires returned by staff were very positive and demonstrated the upbeat ethos at the school. A member of the support staff stated, 'I feel very proud to be part of this team and have witnessed many staff going beyond their duties, giving their own time to support pupils and families.' The school engages with other partners well to provide holistic care and support for the pupils although more co-ordinated work is required to

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tackle deep-seated attendance problems. Parents are well informed about school events through the regular school newsletter. Members of the governing body are well informed and are suitably searching in their questioning of the school. There has been a high turnover of governors recently and a training programme is planned along with a re-allocation of responsibilities. The acting chair of governors is very aware of the needs of new governors.

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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of the parents and carers returned the questionnaire and they were unanimously positive about the work of the school and its impact on their children. The school's own surveys of parents and carers also painted a positive picture overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mount Gilbert 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 10 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 41 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	90	1	10	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	80	2	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	80	2	20	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	80	2	20	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	80	2	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	80	2	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 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.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mount Gilbert School, Dawley TF4 3PP

I am writing to tell you about my findings from the recent inspection of your school. Firstly, let me thank you for giving me your views about the school.

I judged your school to be giving you a satisfactory education and that some parts of the school's work are good. I realise that staff absence last half term has caused some disruptions to your education. Nevertheless, you make sound progress at school and sometimes, when lessons are really interesting and motivating, you make better progress than this. Your behaviour is satisfactory overall but there are sometimes disruptions in lessons. Teaching is improving and the curriculum is good. You seem to enjoy the afternoon activities in particular where you are able to choose your modules of work. Members of staff care for you and guide you well. You all know that you have targets to work toward and you are involved in reviewing and setting these. Those of you who are nearing the time to leave told me that you know what's happening because you have been well guided. I was pleased to see that you do a lot of work in the community. Your charitable work will be making a positive difference to a lot of people. Senior staff are leading the school effectively and are forging ahead with improvements, for example, the school's curriculum planning and the data it has on how well you are doing are getting better all the time.

There are a few things the school needs to focus on as priorities. These are:

Improve the rate of attendance, particularly of those pupils where it is very low.

Make the teaching consistently good by planning work to closely match your needs and by dealing with behaviour problems in lessons swiftly.

Teach a modern foreign language.

You can play your parts by attending regularly so that you can get the most out of your education and by behaving well all of the time.

Your have my good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven

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