

# Billing Brook Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122164
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359179
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Charlesworth

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>	4–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	166
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kneale Grainger
<b>Headteacher</b>	Caroline Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Penistone Road Lumbertubs, Northampton NN3 8EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 773910
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-two lessons taught by 22 different teachers, as well as lunch and break times and a meeting of the school council, were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including pupils' performance data, curriculum planning, safeguarding policies and practices, and a range of evidence on pupils' personal development. Eighty inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, together with those returned by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is the leadership and management of the sixth form?
- How effective is the provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, and to what extent is the new multi-disciplinary approach that is being introduced improving their outcomes?
- What impact do monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by the middle managers have on pupils' progress?
- What more should the school do to improve the work of the governing body and its work to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination?

## Information about the school

Billing Brook is a large special school based on two sites. It caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Most pupils have additional needs. Six pupils are looked after by the local authority and all pupils have statements of their special educational needs. The school is increasing in size, and pupils' needs on entry are increasingly complex. The majority of pupils attend the main site, and about a quarter of secondary-age pupils attend the Billing Brook Satellite which is co-located with Abbeyfield School. Sixth form students attend both sites. Since the last inspection, new purpose-built provision for pupils with more complex ASD has been built on the main site. There are 33 pupils in this department, including some of sixth form age. Further building work is currently taking place to provide additional specialist accommodation for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and very challenging behaviour. There are three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a wide range of other heritages represented in very small numbers. The school is part of a new consortium of special schools in Northamptonshire which provides curriculum specialisms for sixth-form students. The school has a number of awards, including the Inclusion Quality Mark and national Healthy Schools status.

**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

Billing Brook is an outstanding school. It has a clear vision for itself as a centre of excellence and expertise that will benefit not only its own population but pupils, parents, carers and educationalists on a much wider scale. The school is already well on the way to achieving this aim, for example by becoming part of the Northamptonshire Consortium of special schools which offers an enhanced curriculum to many sixth-form students. The headteacher sits on educational committees at a local and national level. With careful thought and consideration, the school relishes taking on new challenges and approaches to improve pupils' outcomes further. Numerous partnerships with professionals and organisations, such as the Salvation Army, make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning, experiences and well-being. Financial resources are very well used to fund improvement and development, for instance, to provide additional services such as speech and occupational therapy. The senior leaders are rigorous in providing support, challenge and training to develop staff skills and 'grow their own' teachers.

Challenging self-evaluation and strategic planning, with the full involvement of staff and members of the governing body, have helped the school to grow, develop and improve significantly since its last inspection. Assessment and the use of information gained are outstanding. Pupils' performance data are robustly analysed to ensure that all groups are achieving equally in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Adjustments to the provision are made accordingly, for example the new provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder arose from this. Pupils from all groups make outstanding progress.

The new accommodation and a change in educational direction for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder now make outstanding provision and these pupils make excellent progress. This area of work was a weakness identified by the last inspection. The change is recognised by parents and carers, one of whom wrote, 'The new unit is wonderful. It is tailored very well to the needs of the pupils.' Provision for the sixth form has grown and developed very significantly since the last inspection. It now offers outstanding provision, underpinned by a creative, vibrant, age-appropriate curriculum with accreditation, inclusion and equal opportunities for success at its heart. The outstanding provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been maintained since the last inspection and children get an excellent start to their education. However, this area of the school has not been refurbished and appears tired in comparison with other parts of the school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding and staff are skilled at making lessons fun and interesting so that pupils are motivated to learn and concentrate well. Signing is now used more widely than at the time of the last inspection, and symbols are very widely used to reinforce communication for individuals and to support the written word. Occasionally, however, symbols are insufficiently used in whole class work, for example in the plenary sessions at the end of lessons. The curriculum is outstanding in every way. It provides

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highly appropriate, relevant and creative age-appropriate activities that support pupils' personal and academic development very effectively.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They very much enjoy school and their attendance is high. Behaviour in class and around the school is outstanding. Incidents of bullying and harassment are rare, and challenging behaviour is expertly and calmly dealt with. Pupils say they feel safe at school, and 100% of parents' and carers' and staff inspection questionnaires agree. This is due to the school's supportive ethos, and outstanding relationships, care, guidance and support.

The school is now in a position of strength. It has established a climate for innovation and positive change, and is developing its provision further. Its capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

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

- Improve and update the inside and outside accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Widen the use of symbols to support pupils' understanding in whole class work.

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

**1**

Pupils in all areas of the school make outstanding progress, including the looked after pupils and those with moderate and severe learning difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorder. English and communication skills develop exceptionally well. This is due to the skilled support of teaching assistants in assuring pupils' understanding, and the use of various complementary communication systems, such as electronic aids. One parent or carer commented: 'Even though my child can't speak, the school has provided him with a voice.' Preparation for pupils' future well-being is outstanding. They gain very good independence skills, for example in hygiene, travel and the use of money. Pupils learn about the world of work through a wide range of activities appropriate to their needs. Numerous opportunities for inclusion and collaborative learning enhance their personal skills. Older pupils of all abilities gain accreditation for their work. Awards include Welsh Board and Entry Level GCSEs, and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They develop qualities such as compassion and tolerance which they show in their kindness towards one another. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, within the bounds of their various capabilities. Their cultural development and contribution to the school and wider community are outstanding because of the school's emphasis on these areas. The carefully planned curriculum and supportive ethos underpin the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In lessons, pupils become increasingly communicative and their concentration improves rapidly. They enjoy their work and success and have real fun and frequent moments when they are genuinely thrilled, such as when they get something right for the first time. Pupils are calm, attentive, cooperative and keen to have their turn, answer questions or voice their opinion. The overwhelming majority of questionnaire returns confirm that pupils enjoy school.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<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>
<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>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</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.

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is outstanding. This was very well demonstrated in a Year 5 lesson where the children were conducting archaeological digs in sand trays, and then taking their finds to the 'curator's table' for identification. Their knowledge about Roman times, artefacts and historical sources increased significantly in this lesson, and the joy in their discoveries was clearly evident. Lesson planning is detailed and some is exemplary. Work and learning objectives are closely matched to individuals' needs. Resources, including computer technology, are expertly used to enhance both teaching and learning. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support learning and behaviour, and their quiet, relevant contribution is outstanding. As a result of the high-quality teaching, pupils are keen to learn, independent as far as they can be, and apply themselves very well. Assessment is outstanding. Frequent assessments are carried out in lessons, through effective questioning and pupils' self-evaluation, and summarised regularly. These lead to changes in lesson plans and targets set for individuals. Pupils' developing skills are carefully tracked and rigorously analysed against a range of recognised progress scales. Robust moderation assures the accuracy of the school's judgements.

The curriculum is creative and inspirational because it is challenging, exciting and relevant to pupils' varying interests and abilities. The curriculum and pupils' enthusiasm are

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enhanced by a wide range of additional activities, visits and visitors to school. These include working with dogs, and weekly violin lessons for a few pupils. Frequent whole-school themes and activities, such as multicultural arts week and fire safety week, bring the school population together with a joint focus. Personal, social and health education is central to the curriculum and communication and personal development are reinforced throughout all activities. Planning includes explicit mention of how each topic - and sometimes each lesson - contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to their ability to stay safe and healthy, contribute to the community and prepare for their future well-being. The curriculum includes work-related learning and an ever-increasing range of accreditation. The school's outstanding partnerships with other schools, colleges and organisations contribute significantly to the curriculum and pupils' future life chances.

The support, care and guidance for pupils and their families are outstanding. Transition arrangements in and out of school are carefully planned and parents and carers are given excellent advice and support then, and at all times. The school works closely with external professionals. Pupils' safety, welfare and health, including their emotional health, are rigorously addressed. The school works very hard and successfully to help pupils lead safe and healthy lives. All pupils have negotiated targets for learning and behaviour which are jointly monitored by parents and carers, pupils and staff. Targets set in pupils' individual education plans include those devised by therapists. They are clear and simple to help pupils know what to strive for, and when they have succeeded. Rewards are given for achievement of these targets and celebrated by adding a leaf to 'achievement trees' and in 'achievement assemblies'.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<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 senior staff and governing body are focused clearly on providing outstanding education and care for the pupils of Billing Brook. This ambition is shared by staff, and the very large majority of those who returned the questionnaires are happy with, and proud of, all aspects of the school. In the last four years, rigorous self-evaluation has identified weaknesses in the provision and informed ambitious plans for improvement. The outcome of these includes the new accommodation, a restructured leadership team, a refreshed, creative curriculum, and the strategic appointment of new staff such as the site facilities manager. The school is rigorous in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its work and pupils' outcomes to ensure equal opportunities for all. Any differences or weaknesses are quickly addressed. This, for example, has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and in the outcomes of pupils with complex needs.

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The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. Members are reflective and recognise their own strengths and areas for development. They offer high levels of professional challenge, and work hard to respond to new national initiatives. Frequent visits to school ensure that governors engage with staff, pupils and parents and see its work on a day-to-day basis. Safeguarding is a key priority of the school and procedures are outstanding. All safeguarding practices are regularly reviewed with a view to improvement. Pupils are supported by detailed risk assessments, referrals to relevant community professionals and staff training. Child protection procedures are thorough and pupils know who to turn to if in distress. A parent and carer support group has been established by their request, and the headteacher and site facilities manager give safeguarding advice to other schools. Pupils behave extremely well towards one another and incidents of discrimination are very rare and immediately dealt with. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding and links closely with the provision for pupils' cultural development and their contribution to the community. All aspects have been carefully analysed and addressed in relation to the school, and local, national, European and global communities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Outstanding provision is made for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They benefit from being in a small 'family' group which includes a few pupils from Years 1 and 2. The children make outstanding progress in their learning and development. Communication and personal, social and emotional development are given very high priority in order to equip the children for learning. Each child is nurtured and supported as a unique individual by outstanding relationships with staff and very effective planning. This ensures their needs are met within an interesting, age-appropriate and relevant curriculum, through a mixture of focused adult-led tasks and play-based activities.

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Children settle quickly, and soon learn the routines of the day. They enjoy school very much, for example, requesting that previous activities such as playing with ice balls in the water tray are repeated. Children's developing skills are carefully observed, noted, tracked and used to inform curricular planning and ensure their continued progress. Data show that the children make very rapid progress in all areas of learning, for example increasing their communication skills by an overall average of 36% in six months. One child joined the class with very limited communication, but within a year was able to describe his drawing, including 'spiderman's black tongue'.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior staff continually seek to improve and change the provision to help children further. The children's welfare needs are very well met by adherence to the school's outstanding practices, and to the additional requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Outstanding relationships are established with parents and carers who are very well supported by the staff, both in and out of school. The effectiveness of the provision is outstanding and children get an excellent start to their education.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding and students' outcomes are exceptional as a result. The provision is strongly underpinned by outstanding leadership and management, curriculum, and care, support and guidance. The senior staff are ambitious for the students. They work successfully to provide high quality, and push forward boundaries in all that the provision does. Teaching is good and new staff members are well supported to develop their skills and expertise. Individual students' academic and personal needs are very well met through careful, diligent planning. The contribution made by support staff is outstanding as they work with initiative to support students' behaviour and learning.

Students' behaviour and commitment to learning are exemplary. Attendance, at 97%, is high and they clearly enjoy their time at school. The curriculum is vibrant, relevant and interesting. Students are engaged and motivated by cross-curricular themes and events, such as a recent 'awe and wonder' day which included a magician, tropical animals and amazing scientific experiments. Numerous opportunities are given for students to learn in the community and in conjunction with students from other schools. Many attend local colleges for short courses, and all work is accredited as far as possible. Students benefit from the additional curricular opportunities offered by the Northampton Consortium. Those in the satellite benefit considerably from inclusion and the use of specialist facilities and

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teachers in Abbeyfields school, for example for dance and 'salon services'. Sport, residential trips and adventurous activities, such as white-water rafting, contribute significantly to students' outstanding personal development. Various enterprise activities, such as planning and running stalls to raise money for charity, help students to contribute to the school and wider community and prepare them very well for their future economic well-being. The support, care and guidance offered is excellent. The provision supports them to mature, learn, enjoy life and make safe and healthy choices ready for adulthood.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of questionnaire returns gave a positive response to all 13 statements. These were supported by many additional comments praising the school and staff, and outlining the significant improvements in their children's academic and personal development. Six statements drew a very small number of concerns with the way that the school addresses unacceptable behaviour attracting the most. The inspection team's evidence confirms the parents' and carers' positive views and it found the school outstanding in all aspects, including the way that staff manage pupils' behaviour.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Billing Brook 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 166 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	73	21	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	79	16	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	68	24	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	63	28	35	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	76	19	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	66	25	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	68	25	31	1	1	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)	46	58	26	33	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	74	21	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	66	17	21	5	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	70	22	28	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	74	18	23	2	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	79	17	21	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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 pupils' 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.**



28 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Billing Brook Special School, Northampton NN3 8EZ**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, sitting in on your lessons and seeing how well you are all doing. We are delighted to tell you that Billing Brook is an outstanding school. It has a great number of outstanding features. These include:

- your learning and progress
- your personal development, exemplary behaviour and high attendance
- your kindness and compassion for others, and the contribution you make to the local and wider community
- the quality of teaching and assessment
- the curriculum, which is particularly exciting and interesting for you all
- the care, guidance and support offered to you and your parents and carers
- the provision for those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the sixth form and in the new department for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder
- the school's leaders and managers, who work hard to bring about this excellence, and to develop the school further.

We have asked the school to do two things to become even better. These are:

- to update the inside and outside premises for the youngest children
- to make sure that symbols are used as effectively in whole-class activities as they are with individuals and in small groups

Keep up your excellent work!

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth

Lead inspector

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