

Beaufort School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103627
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286710
Inspection date	13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Muriel Castle
Headteacher	Debbie Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001
School address	16 Coleshill Road Birmingham B36 8AA
Telephone number	0121 7833886
Fax number	0121 7836994

Age group	2-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school provides for pupils with severe, and profound and multiple, learning difficulties, although an increasing number have complex communication difficulties associated with autism and some have fragile health. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school serves the eastern region of Birmingham around Hodge Hill and almost all of the pupils are from ethnic minorities, most being of Asian heritage. The local area is among the 25% most deprived wards nationally and a higher-than-expected percentage of pupils, 42%, are eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection, there have been two headteachers and an acting headteacher. Plans to relocate the school into specifically designed accommodation, shared with a mainstream primary school, are well advanced and the anticipated opening date of the new school is May 2009. The headteacher has been at the school for a short time, having been being appointed in April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beaufort School is a satisfactory school. In the short time she has been at the school, the headteacher has made a significant contribution to raising expectations among staff and pupils alike and there is evidence that her impact is already improving teaching and learning. Parents and carers are very pleased with the school, one saying that sending her child to the school 'was the best decision of her life' because he is doing so much more than she thought possible.

The outstanding relationships between pupils and the staff help pupils feel safe and secure, and very happy and comfortable, at school. Pupils develop their personal and social skills well in growing to be as independent as possible because of the good care and guidance and the support of specialists, especially the physiotherapist. They behave well, most attend regularly and they enjoy taking a full part in all the school offers, including the Easter and Summer schools. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school with complex medical issues, which are dealt with well by the specially trained teaching assistants, but the time allocated for the specialist support of a trained nurse is much less than is the case in many other equivalent schools.

Standards are well below average because of pupils' difficulties with learning. In the Foundation Stage children achieve satisfactorily over each of the early learning areas. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 do well in communication and in numeracy, and very well in the creative arts such as drama, which has been recognised nationally through the award of the ArtsMark at the gold level. The building imposes limitations on what can be taught and how teaching can occur, but achievement in subjects such as science, design and technology, art and design and physical education (PE), whilst affected by this, is still satisfactory. Over this last term the proportion of good teaching has increased, but overall teaching is satisfactory. Planning for learning is often good, but in a minority of lessons assessment data is not used well enough in guiding planning and in these lessons pupils do not always achieve to their capabilities. Also, some lessons do not make enough use of interactive whiteboards to bring sound, colour and movement to learning. The curriculum is good and the focus on learning basic skills and providing opportunities for pupils to become as independent as possible means that pupils are learning what is right for them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has very high expectations for the school and she and the deputy headteacher make a very strong team. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not gather sufficient assessment information to judge just how good the school is or to prioritise development planning. The staff are capable and committed. The key issues from the last inspection have been addressed effectively, and with the pending move to the new building, the school has the capacity to move forward rapidly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more effectively in planning lessons, informing development and helping to judge how good the school is.
- Improve the accommodation.
- Make more effective use of interactive whiteboards in supporting teaching and learning.
- Increase the availability of specialist nursing support.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Parents and carers are pleased with the progress their children make and say that one important reason for this is that many staff are able to speak to their children in their first language, for example, in Punjabi or Bengali.

The school has evidence to show that children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in each of the early learning areas. When compared with those in equivalent schools nationally and against emerging Ofsted data, pupils in Years 1 to 6 who attend regularly achieve well in learning to communicate and in learning about number, and very well in drama. Achievement is satisfactory in the other subjects, where the accommodation has a negative impact.

Pupils who do not attend regularly do not do so well, but there is no evidence that any group of pupils, for example, those with the most complex needs or those who have the highest capability, underachieves.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, are open and friendly and show they are comfortable at school by the self-confident way in which they make friends with staff and the other pupils. One parent said that for her child, going to school was 'like stepping back into her home'. The outstanding relationships pupils develop with staff help them make good progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents recognise that their children are becoming increasingly mature and responsible and through, for example, the good provision for toilet training and the effective programme for promoting eating skills, they are growing to be as independent as possible. One parent said that, 'There is something about the school that is right'. Pupils enjoy school very much and this is seen in the laughter that is a regular feature of lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes. With good support, they learn how to handle equipment safely. They are aware of the need to maintain healthy lifestyles and of the importance of staying fit and eating healthily. Through their work in lessons they become aware that communicating well and dealing with numbers will be important when they are adults.

Attendance is satisfactory and many pupils attend regularly. Because of their fragile health, a small number do not, and some spend time away from school visiting their families in other countries. Added together, these pupils make up a sizeable minority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The well-moderated programme of lesson observations carried out over the last term shows teaching to be satisfactory, but improving, with an increasing number of lessons being judged as good.

Class sizes are small and the teachers and their assistants know the pupils well, and most of the time this helps them plan learning that is relevant to them. But this is not always the case. In the less successful lessons, assessment information is not used well enough in providing

targets for learning that are sufficiently precise to ensure new learning is based on prior learning, and this limits achievement. Also, for many subjects, progress is not recorded well enough against the indicators for recording the achievements of pupils with special educational needs (P Scales), and this makes it difficult to recognise how well pupils are doing. The teaching assistants are well qualified and in the good lessons they support their teachers very well. They are especially good at signing and using symbols and specialist strategies such as the exchange of pictures in helping pupils to communicate. In some lessons they are not deployed well enough, and in these lessons their skills and knowledge have too little impact on learning.

Teachers and their assistants are constantly having to deal with the challenge of presenting lessons in some classrooms that are too small and in others without any specialist facilities for teaching, for example, science, design and technology and art and design. They are supported well by a good range of appropriate resources, including electronic aids such as specialist switches and recording and voice machines, but too little use is made of interactive whiteboards. These are fewer in number than in most equivalent schools and they are not used well enough in presenting learning objectives or in making learning more interesting.

Pupils show they are comfortable as learners through behaving well and, most often, by working hard to do their best. The opinion of senior pupils is that they work hard in their lessons, 'but because we like the staff very much we have fun too'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences in each of the early learning areas. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 builds on these experiences within the context of the national curriculum but also focuses on making pupils as independent as possible by concentrating on improving their basic skills and developing their personal and social skills. The themes are planned well and pupils benefit from this because new learning is regularly reinforced through being applied in many subjects.

The curriculum is broadened by a good range of enrichment opportunities. These include the residential visits and the Easter and Summer schools, which offer good chances to continue learning in the academic subjects and very valuable additional opportunities to practise personal and social skills. The close link with a local mainstream primary school benefits pupils because they gain from taking part in many jointly held activities. The wide range of opportunities pupils have to develop and show their skills and knowledge in the creative arts is a particular strength.

The good progress pupils make toward being as independent as is possible is testament to the good quality of the curriculum. But the limitations of the accommodation constrain standards, especially in subjects such as science, design and technology, art and design and PE.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for safeguarding pupils is good. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and child protection procedures are robust and known by all staff. Pupils are extremely well cared for and are safe in lessons throughout the school and when they visit the local community. Pupils' medical care is good. It is often undertaken by the staff, who are appropriately trained, but nursing support is limited. While this might not have been as much of an issue in the past, more pupils are entering the school with increasingly complex medical needs and would benefit from the closer support of a trained nurse.

Pupils' additional needs, especially those to do with physiotherapy and speech and language, are dealt with well. The absence of any storage space for physiotherapy equipment or a dedicated room means that physiotherapy has to be provided during lessons in the classrooms. This is not ideal and the physiotherapy support is effective only because of precise planning by the physiotherapist and the good work of the teaching assistants. Pupils who have hearing difficulties do not fare as well. They gain the support of the specialist teacher for the hearing impaired but the nature of the building makes classrooms noisy and there are no sound fields to reduce extraneous noise.

Target setting for learning is benefiting from the recent introduction of a commercial scheme that links subject targets to the P scales. This is a good system, but as yet is not being fully implemented in all the subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has made an outstanding start. She has a clear vision for the future of the school, sets high standards for her own work and is expecting staff and pupils to achieve equivalently high standards in their work. She is supported extremely well by a very competent deputy headteacher and the quality of this very capable team bodes very well for the future. But they are aware that to continue to raise individual achievement, better use needs to be made of assessment information in planning lessons and they know too that by gaining more precise information on how well pupils are doing they will be better placed to recognise priority areas for development and to judge more accurately how good the school is.

Governance is good. The chairperson has a clear recognition of the important role of governors in ensuring that the upcoming move is smooth and that pupils and staff gain all the advantages possible from sharing their new accommodation with those in a mainstream school. Fire and health and safety issues are assiduously dealt with, but the last audit of finances was some time ago.

On a day-to-day basis the school is calm, ordered and very well organised and all staff do very well in ensuring that the limiting effects of the accommodation on pupils' learning are minimised. But the LA, governors and senior leaders are right in recognising that the accommodation is unsuitable and despite the best efforts of staff it will remain a significant barrier to raising achievement until the move to the new building is completed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beaufort School, Hodge Hill, Birmingham, B36 8AA

Thank you for helping me find out about your school. I enjoyed visiting you and I think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

I especially liked these things:

- The way the staff care for you and support you and the good way you develop as young people who are polite and friendly, know how to behave well and like to be as independent as possible.
- The way staff make the school a happy place to be because it is organised well and everyone, that is, the staff and yourselves, knows that the new headteacher expects everyone to work as hard as possible.
- That lessons are fun times. I know this because I saw you being happy and laughing a lot in lessons even though you were working hard at the time.
- That what you learn is right for you.

There are a few things that I would like to see improved:

- I would like the senior leaders to use all the information they have on you to plan lessons that are always at the right level for you, to use this information to make the school better and to help them know how good the school is.
- I would like your teachers to use the interactive whiteboards more often to make your lessons even more interesting.
- I would like the nurse to be in school more often, so that she can deal with any medical needs that you have.
- The buildings, because they are not a good enough place for you to learn or your teachers to teach.

Finally, I want you to continue to behave as well as you do and to keep working hard in all your lessons.

With best wishes

- Alan Dobbins
- Lead Inspector