



Glenwood School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109746
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288484
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Steven Parker

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Type of school | Special | School address | Beech Road |
| School category | Community | | Dunstable |
| Age range of pupils | 2–11 | | Bedfordshire LU6 3LY |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01582 667106 |
| Number on roll (school) | 64 | Fax number | 01582 696442 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Rupert Groves |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs Shirley Crosbie |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 January 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Glenwood is a day special school for primary-aged pupils with a range of severe learning difficulties and disabilities. Nearly half have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), around a fifth have profound and complex needs and the majority have significant communication difficulties. Pupils' backgrounds reflect the diverse nature of Dunstable and the wider county communities. There are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and none have English as an additional language. There are more than twice as many boys as girls. The school has less than half the number of pupils it had at its last inspection. This is a direct result of local government re-organisation and changes in Bedfordshire's policy on special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Glenwood is a good school with many outstanding features that has successfully overcome the considerable challenge of managing the impact of its falling roll, and is now going from strength to strength. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils, enabling them to make exceptional progress in developing their social and communication skills. The school has developed and sustained highly successful partnerships with parents, other schools and many services and agencies. As a direct result, parents are extremely well supported. Many parents wrote in glowing terms to express their appreciation for the difference that this had made to their children and, consequently, their family's lives. Typical of the comments were 'It is a fantastic school. All the staff are incredibly supportive, going out of their way to give us constructive help'.

The highly experienced headteacher provides exemplary leadership, with what one parent described as 'great drive and passion, because everything matters to her and all those children under her jurisdiction will always come first'. It is, therefore, not surprising that the whole staff team have worked very well together to provide wide ranging provision that makes a significant contribution to delivering the whole 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Most importantly, there is a conscious commitment to encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. The school's secure environment helps them to explore in safety and take the many responsibilities they are offered seriously, thereby making an active contribution to the life of the school. They also learn how to eat healthily and take part productively in physical activities. The tangible enjoyment that they gain means that they want to be at school and, consequently, their attendance is excellent. Teachers and teaching assistants work in very effective partnership to help all pupils make the best progress they can. They are helped in this by highly successful collaborative work with a range of therapists and other professionals. Together they ensure that children are given a very good start from a very low base on entry to the Foundation stage, and then go on to achieve well by the time they leave. Teachers sometimes do not have a clear enough idea of what constitutes good or better progress from whole school data in order to make sure that the targets they set are properly challenging. Nor do they involve pupils fully in the process. Whilst pupils are grouped according to their particular needs, the school provides a very inclusive experience, including opportunities, where appropriate, to learn and play alongside their more able mainstream peers.

Leadership and management are good overall. The school knows itself well as a result of rigorous and effective self-evaluation, although it is sometimes too modest. The headteacher is ably supported by her recently appointed assistant head, the other very capable teaching and non-teaching members of her senior leadership team and teachers with delegated curriculum responsibilities. Governance is outstanding. This effective combination of skills, support and developing distributed management assures the school's strong capacity to sustain its current quality and to develop further the many initiatives it has planned.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the wealth of information it already gathers more effectively, to ensure that all staff have a clear idea of what constitutes good pupil progress across all subjects when planning for future learning and setting appropriately challenging targets.
- Make pupils more aware of their targets, so that they can be more active in evaluating their own progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils meet the targets set for them and, in relation to their capability and starting points, which are well below national expectations when they arrive at the school, they achieve well. They make exceptionally good progress in communication skills as a result of staff utilising a wide and imaginative range of approaches consistently across the school. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in all the areas of learning, because staff help them to settle in quickly, enjoy their time at school and develop an awareness of the needs of others in their class. Most pupils make at least good progress and some may make very good progress, as reflected in the school's own data. A few make such good progress that they are able to move on to schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or even mainstream schools. Pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties as well as those with ASD, are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across all key stages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are exceptional. During their time at school they become self confident, happy young people. They have outstanding relationships with the adults that help them, and with each other, and there is a very strong culture of mutual support and respect. This also helps to ensure that behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very straightforward about how safe and secure they feel, and are able to explain how they could talk to staff if they were worried about anything. They make a significant contribution to their school and wider communities. Whilst the school does not have a school council, much productive work is being undertaken in conjunction with pupils from mainstream schools to help Glenwood pupils to become even more autonomous. Pupils already take a full part in many community activities and contribute to local and national fundraising events. They also successfully gain those skills that will stand them in good stead for their future lives, especially in improving their speaking and listening and other aspects of literacy numeracy and information and communication technology. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, so that they are sensitive to others' needs and develop a strong sense of fairness and justice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is well informed and effectively engages pupils in their learning. Teachers work hard to match work closely to individual needs, so that pupils are happy and try their hardest in lessons. All staff manage any difficult behaviour very well, lessons are brisk and lively and teachers provide a wide range of interesting activities to capture pupils' imagination. Resources are well chosen and used very effectively to keep pupils interested in learning, so they can learn new concepts. Teaching assistants significantly enhance the quality of teaching by providing very effective support for pupils' learning, for example, in their skilful use of communication aids and real objects to promote communication. Assessment of pupils' work is regular and consistent and makes a good contribution to their progress. Teachers use information from tracking pupils' progress effectively to plan sequences of lessons. However, they do not always have a clear enough idea of what constitutes good or better progress from whole school data, in order to ensure that the targets they set are properly challenging.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding in its breadth of focus and relevance, ensuring that pupils thoroughly enjoy their education. Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), is excellent. For example, the school organises a weekly shop and a cafe, where pupils communicate what they wish to buy, look after real money and use this to pay for items they have ordered. They then use these skills in real life practical situations within the community. Planning for the variety and complexity of individual learning needs is impressive, with a strong emphasis on the development of communication and social skills. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and adapted to meet the needs of all children, so that they all get off to a good start in their learning. The first rate range of opportunities to extend learning include: good sporting links to provide basketball and football coaching, a comprehensive programme of weekly enrichment activities such as Spanish, organised by higher level teaching assistants, visiting artists, extensive use of the community and an annual residential visit to promote independence. The school has ambitious plans to continue extending the range of opportunities through, for example, integrating use of the impressive new sensory garden within its schemes of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Parents particularly praise this aspect of the school's work and value the significant impact that it has on their children's welfare and learning. Teachers have very detailed knowledge of each pupil's personal and medical needs and use this very well to provide highly effective care and

pastoral support. Parents and carers are kept very well informed through high quality home-school books, telephone contact and regular newsletters. They are also very effectively involved in discussing future targets for their children and assessing progress towards them on a termly basis. Teachers do not, however, engage pupils actively enough in reviewing how well they are getting on in relation to their own targets. The quality of annual reviews of Statements of Special Educational Needs is outstanding and the very well written progress reports give a full picture of pupils' achievements. There are excellent procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils, with very good attention given to risk assessments, child protection and required safeguarding procedures. Working relationships between the school and health, social and welfare professionals, together with other schools and the wider community are excellent, and contribute much to pupils' well being and progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have successfully brought the school through a difficult time in its history. Over the last two years the budget has been reduced, because of the fall in pupil numbers, and this required a significant reduction in the school's staffing. The situation was handled very sensitively by the headteacher, working in close collaboration with an outstanding governing body. Sadly, as a result, the school lost a number of very experienced and capable teachers and managers. It has, however, rebuilt its staff base through imaginative recruitment and high quality professional development to ensure continuing, good quality provision and outcomes for pupils. The headteacher's vision for her school has been pivotal in this process, as has the excellent support, encouragement and challenge of the governors, who know their school very well and share her high aspirations. They have contributed to the very effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision, been involved in the process of planning necessary improvements on the basis of lessons learned and supported the school in managing a complex budget situation. All teachers contribute actively to monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum, and are being effectively supported in the school's ambition to distribute management responsibilities and accountability across the staff. There is, though, some way to go before this is achieved. The school has a clear strategy for further development, provides good value for money and has strong capacity for continuing improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

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.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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

26 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Glenwood School, Beech Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 3LY

As you know, I recently visited Glenwood with a colleague to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed seeing your work and talking to you. We were particularly impressed by how confident you were in talking to us and explaining things.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is good and does some things especially well.

What we liked about your school:

- The excellent care that all staff take of you, so that you can become as independent and mature as possible
- The way that you love coming to school, work extremely hard, and want to learn
- The impressive range of things that you do and learn about
- The very effective way that your teachers, assistants and other adults work with you
- The good progress that you make in your work, especially in learning to communicate and how to behave well
- Your very special headteacher and the way she runs your school.

We felt that your school would be even better if

- Teachers used what they know about you better when setting your targets.
- More of you could be involved in setting your own targets and finding out how well you are doing.

Do carry on with your good work.

With kind regards,

Steven Parker

Lead Inspector