

Mabel Prichard School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123339
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314566
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Hewlett
Headteacher	Miss Jane Wallington
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Cuddesdon Way Littlemore Oxford OX4 6SB
Telephone number	01865 777878
Fax number	01865 775218

Age group	2-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A large minority of pupils have additional complex learning needs such as autistic spectrum conditions. Most pupils are White British in origin although a third are from other ethnic groups. There are currently eight pupils from these other ethnic groups who are at the early stages of learning English. The school is on two sites, which are some distance apart and which are co-located with mainstream schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well and a few make outstanding progress. All pupils make excellent gains in their personal development because teachers know them very well and continually provide them with opportunities to improve their skills. This underpins the pupils' academic achievements. Pupils with complex needs are helped to overcome the additional barriers to their learning through the school's good success in enabling them to communicate more effectively. The school's methods of teaching communication are also very effective with pupils for whom English is not their first language. Children in the Foundation Stage provision quickly learn routines and many begin to make outstanding progress as they settle into school.

Pupils thrive within the caring and supportive ethos of the school. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is excellent. They feel very secure and well supported. They learn how to be healthy, to keep safe and to behave well very successfully. They value the school and this is evident through the very good relationships they have with staff and their good attendance. Pupils love coming to school and parents are, almost without exception, very pleased for their children to attend, knowing they are safe and happy and are making good progress. One parent's comment was typical, 'My child has gained so much from being there'.

The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The teaching is good because lessons are interesting and well managed. Teachers adapt learning activities to the differing abilities and interests of the pupils successfully. The assessment procedures used in school are relatively new. They are effective in that teachers systematically record every small step in the pupils' progress. Sometimes, however, teachers do not analyse these records rigorously enough to set targets, which are sufficiently challenging. This slows down the pace of learning. The senior team are aware that the ways in which assessment data is collected on pupils should be simplified, so leaders can more easily obtain an overview of how quickly the pupils are making progress. In contrast, however, pupils' communication targets are clear and precise and this plays a significant part in helping them to improve their verbal skills, make appropriate choices and interact successfully with others. Teachers take every opportunity to tell pupils how well they are doing and this gives them the confidence to try their best. The good curriculum provision is enriched by opportunities to interact with the community and by effective programmes in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Older pupils benefit from good programmes to teach them about the world of work and to prepare them for leaving school. Pupils are supported, where practical, to take part in activities with mainstream pupils in local schools. This has a positive impact on their confidence and motivation to learn.

School leaders have substantially improved several important aspects of provision since the previous inspection. For example, assessment procedures are now more robust, the curriculum has improved for the oldest pupils and teaching takes better account of the wide range of pupils' abilities. The governing body is supportive to the school and provides a good and improving standard of strategic leadership. The school evaluates its own work effectively and there are good procedures for development planning, for example, in the action plans of subject leaders. This indicates that, together with the drive and enthusiasm of the senior team, the school has a good capacity to build on the progress made since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. Many children make excellent progress in their knowledge and understanding and in their personal development. The Foundation Stage provision is integrated with the co-located primary school. Some children are able to reach their potential by joining the mainstream children within the integrated unit. Teachers and support staff know the children very well and the assessment of their developing communication skills is clear and focused. As a result, most pupils make outstanding progress in speaking and listening. The classroom is a calm, happy place because the children feel safe and routines are well established. The staff are warm and encouraging while managing children's behaviour very well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the assessment of pupils' progress more effectively to create challenging learning targets for each pupil.
- Simplify the collection of performance data to make it easier for the school's leaders to maintain an overview of the pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All the pupils achieve well and a few make outstanding progress, especially in their personal skills. The pupils' attainment remains, however, generally exceptionally below national standards, although there is no evidence that any individual or group of pupils makes less than good progress according to their abilities. The pupils with autistic spectrum conditions make particularly good progress in their communication. Other pupils with profound and multiple difficulties make good progress in very small steps across a range of personal skills. Older pupils are able to gain a range of nationally accredited certificates and these are added to their ongoing Records of Achievement, which they accumulate as they move through the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding progress in their personal development reflects their excellent gains in learning spiritual values and their success in developing their skills in communication. They make outstanding gains in their social and moral development, especially in their tolerance of less mobile or articulate children. This is because all staff members provide excellent role models for them. As a result, on numerous occasions during the inspection, the pupils were seen to display warmth and compassion towards their classmates. Pupils also gain very clear knowledge and understanding about their own and other cultures. Encouraged by staff, the pupils practise their personal skills in all their activities. They develop a very good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities they have to take part in physical activity. They make good progress in literacy and numeracy and this helps them to develop better independence skills.

The high levels of careful supervision ensure there is no bullying or intimidation. The pupils feel safe and confident within the school's calm atmosphere. This helps them to settle to learning and has a strong impact on their progress. The pupils feel very well supported because teachers manage their behaviour outstandingly well. Parents confirm that their children really

enjoy their learning and one commented that 'He is delighted to be there'. This is reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes to school, which have a substantial impact on their achievements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well-paced lessons, which meet their needs. Pupils gain confidence to learn new things because they receive a high level of individual tuition from well-trained teaching assistants. Pupils with communication difficulties and those with profound and multiple difficulties are able to take a full part in classroom activities because staff provide good visual clues and make good use of facilities to enable the pupils to learn through sensory experiences. The management of behaviour is excellent and has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Classroom staff play a full part in assessing and recording the steps in pupils' progress. Teachers, however, do not always make best use of this assessment information to create targets for pupils, which are sufficiently challenging.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is effective because it is regularly monitored to make sure that it helps pupils to make progress and is relevant to them. As a result, learning activities are of a good standard and significantly better adapted to pupils' needs than at the previous inspection. There are well-managed programmes in basic skills. Provision for supporting pupils' progress in communication is good. Teachers are particularly proficient in strategies to overcome the barriers to understanding faced, for instance, by pupils with autism. There are good procedures in place to teach older pupils about adult life through effective citizenship programmes and work experience activities. This helps to prepare them for further education or training. This area of provision has also improved since the previous inspection. There are a small number of arrangements for higher ability pupils to integrate to some extent in the mainstream schools with which they are co-located. This gives them increased confidence to deal with new people and situations. The curriculum is enhanced by trips and events and all pupils, including those with additional difficulties, are fully included in activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The standards of physical and emotional care of pupils are high and very carefully monitored. There are rigorous safeguarding procedures and these help to ensure the school is a safe and happy place. Parents find this reassuring and pupils greatly appreciate it. Pupils make outstanding progress in their social and moral skills and in developing their confidence to make independent choices. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and look to them as trusted providers of guidance and support. Pupils are made aware when they have produced good work. Teachers in the secondary part of the school have devised effective ways to help pupils to understand how to improve their work further. There are however at present no comparable procedures in the primary department.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and her deputy have driven through substantial improvements since the previous inspection. This achievement has been particularly impressive since the school does not have an extended management team. Coordinators of subjects have a positive influence on the delivery of their subject but they have insufficient time to monitor pupils' achievement in their subject. This has an impact on the pace of learning. The strengths of the relatively new assessment system have not yet been fully exploited to provide leaders with a useful overview of the pupils' performance. Valuable evidence, however, which comes from the rigorous monitoring of teaching and the curriculum, enables the head and deputy to evaluate accurately the school's improvements in provision.

The excellent communication and a strong team spirit within the school enable staff to feel fully consulted, involved and valued. The quality of professional training is good and clearly linked to the high quality of monitoring and performance management of teachers and all other staff. There are challenging targets for all staff members. This has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' good achievement. Resources are well used and the school gives good value for money.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	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

15 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mabel Prichard School, Oxford, OX4 6SB

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom and at lunchtime. Thank you and well done.

I was only with you for two days. That was long enough, however, for me to realise that you go to a good school. I could see that you all enjoy school very much. Here are a few of the good things I found:

- you work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in learning how to behave and how to treat other people
- your teachers and the many different people at the school look after you well
- your teachers make sure your lessons are interesting and you get lots of support. This means you enjoy learning and do your best
- all the staff help you to tell people what you want and to ask questions. They also teach you to listen carefully to what other people say.

I think the school could improve even further if the staff were to make better use of some of the information they collect about you, so they are quite clear about how well you are all doing in your work. They should also make sure that they use this information, sometimes to set you higher targets, so you learn even faster.

You can help too, just by going on working as hard as you have been doing!

Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes to you all,

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector