



# Barley Lane School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113636  
**Local Authority** Devon  
**Inspection number** 289678  
**Inspection date** 18 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Charles Hackett

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Barley Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		St Thomas
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8-15		Exeter EX4 1TA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 430774
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	32	<b>Fax number</b>	01392 433193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	W S C Newing
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Rod Conway
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 June 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 8-15	<b>Inspection date</b> 18 September 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 289678
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

## Description of the school

Barley Lane is a special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are admitted to the school after periods of disruptive education either in mainstream or other special schools. As a result of this, the standards that they have reached on entry are usually below the national average. Currently all pupils are White British. From the start of this term, the school has taken pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Following a review of the school by the local authority in December 2005, the school has been the subject of a School Causing Concern (SCC) plan, to bring about improvements. Currently there is no substantive headteacher and the post is being shared on a part-time temporary basis by two headteachers who have also remained in post as headteachers of their own schools. The governors and the local authority are trying to appoint a permanent headteacher but have been unsuccessful after four advertisements in the national press for the position.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Barley Lane is providing an inadequate quality of education for its pupils. Undoubtedly the difficulties in appointing a permanent headteacher have contributed greatly to this situation. 'We want a full-time headteacher' said one pupil, echoed by others. The temporary arrangements for the management of the school are not providing the school with the leadership it needs to improve and be effective. The School Causing Concern (SCC) plan correctly identifies key elements that need improvement but after one school term in the plan, there is insufficient evidence to show whether the plan is bringing about improvements. There is no strategic plan for how the school's provision will be developed.

The school knows too little about how well pupils are progressing. Individual teachers record some achievements but these are not being collated and analysed to give an overall view on pupils' achievements or to set targets for improvements. Pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory. Records show there are high levels of serious behavioural incidents on a daily basis. The support and guidance given to pupils to improve their behaviour is ineffective and exclusion is used far too frequently. Pupils themselves say that at times they feel unsafe because of the behaviour of other pupils. The systems to record how incidents are resolved are unsatisfactory.

There are some staff who are more effective than others at managing pupils' behaviour and this is where the most effective teaching takes place. There is a strong commitment from staff to work together and 'face up' to the challenge that pupils present and build up positive working relationships with them. However, teaching is ineffective overall because of weaknesses in the management of pupils' behaviour, the planning of lessons and the guidance given for academic achievement.

Pupils' attendance rates are well below average and even when in school, many pupils fail to remain in class. Pupils feel they are listened to by staff and that there is a conscious effort from the school to enable them to understand the benefits of healthy lifestyles. The exception to this, though, is that the school openly 'turns a blind eye' to pupils smoking on the school field.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating their capacity to secure the necessary improvements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Establish more effective leadership and management to ensure that the work of the school is monitored, evaluated and improved
- Ensure that pupils can achieve and make progress in all subjects through improving the effectiveness of teaching and the guidance given to them
- Improve the systems to support and guide pupils in their personal development, particularly in improving their behaviour

- Ensuring that pupils are always safe and that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded appropriately

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because of a number of significant factors. These include poor rates of attendance both in school and to actual lessons, the disruption caused by inappropriate behaviour, and weaknesses in curriculum planning. The school does not collate and analyse information on pupils' progress and therefore it is not able to set targets accurately for improvement to their achievements. The school took the decision not to enter pupils in national tests (SATS) during the current year. It is therefore difficult for the school to know what standards pupils reach but a scrutiny of their work indicates that they are below average in most, if not all, subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils arrive at the school having experienced difficulties with their personal development and there is no indication that these are being resolved. Last year there were over 300 temporary exclusions, which is high, as well as other occasions when pupils were taken home because of their poor levels of behaviour. Pupils remain very unsettled and many put themselves at risk by running away from the school site.

Pupils say they enjoy the activities on offer each Friday afternoon and a few obviously enjoy playing football with the younger members of staff at breaktimes. Their attendance, however, is well below the national average. The good relationships pupils have with staff reflect the recognition they have that staff care for them, although in many cases this does not stop them from being abusive or threatening towards staff and each other. Pupils have a positive voice in the school and feel that they are listened to by staff, and activities such as visits to a local gym have come from ideas put forward by the pupils themselves in the school council. Through personal, social and health education, lessons pupils gain some understanding of health issues but most choose to smoke during breaktimes. Their readiness for their future economic well-being is adversely affected by the weaknesses in their literacy and mathematics achievements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

While the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory, there are weaknesses in the teaching. These weaknesses prevent the pupils from making the progress they should over time with the result that teaching and learning are inadequate overall.

There are undoubtedly good examples of teaching in the school and here pupils make their best progress. Typically, learning is best when pupils are interested in the topics that are being covered and the staff have good behaviour management skills. For example, teaching is good in information and communication technology lessons and the good quality of pupils' work reflects their interest and ability to listen to instructions to extend their skills. Throughout the school, teaching assistants offer good support, working hard to encourage pupils to stay on task.

However, weaknesses in teaching reduce its overall effectiveness on pupils' learning. Lessons are not always focused clearly on what pupils already know and tasks set do not often address pupils' different ability levels. Staff seek to face up to the many difficulties that pupils have and insist on acceptable behaviour. They are often not successful in doing this and many lessons are disrupted because of poor behaviour. Too often, pupils' swearing and verbally abusing each other goes unchecked. Pupils working well in one class can be disturbed by other pupils behaving poorly in the corridors or even running into their classroom.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 4**

With the exception of a modern foreign language for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, the school offers all of the subjects of the national curriculum. However, the SCC plan recognises that there are significant weaknesses in the planning of what is taught in the lessons. These weaknesses mean that the school is not ensuring that pupils are studying all the topics they are expected to cover and as a result the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Additionally, there is insufficient focus on the individual learning needs of pupils. Teachers largely make their own decisions in planning their lessons and there is no checking by subject leaders to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils in what they are being taught. There is a well-planned personal, social and health education scheme but its effectiveness is reduced by pupils' unsatisfactory behaviour and smoking.

Enrichment activities are limited and no extra-curriculum clubs exist either during the lunchtime or after school. The new courses for pupils in Year 10 just starting this September are being developed appropriately to include vocational experiences and opportunities to achieve external awards.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 4**

Care, support and guidance are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient tracking of what progress pupils may be making in their academic and personal development. Although some individual teachers keep information on pupils' achievements, there is no consistent procedure for this and any information gained is not being used to offer effective support for pupils in the form of setting achievement targets. Pupils do have targets set for them but these are more related to personal development. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting them and inadequate attention is given to analysing

whether they are successfully helping pupils improve. There is insufficient information provided to pupils on how they can improve their behaviour.

Parental links are weak and there are ineffective links with outside agencies, such as those for child guidance. This means that the school is often working in isolation in seeking to address pupils' difficulties. There are plans to seek to improve this situation in the future. Child protection systems have been set up and the majority of staff have received training, with more planned for the future. Concerns, however, exist about the systems used to record incidents when staff need to physically hold pupils, and the support provided for both staff and pupils involved in such incidents.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

Central to the reasons why this school is ineffective is the inadequacy of leadership and management throughout the school. The acting headteachers are trying to bring about a 'cultural change' within the school that gives all staff more responsibility to take control and support pupils. However, despite the best intentions and aspirations for the future, the school lacks leadership and direction to ensure that it is improving. Systems to evaluate what is happening now are non-existent and support for staff is ineffective. The SCC plan has not been monitored with sufficient rigour and as a result, the school is not clear if what has been implemented during its first term has had a positive impact on pupils. Governors are fully committed to raising the standards and have been energetic in their efforts to bring about improvements, but they do not have effective systems to monitor what is happening in the school and whether the SCC plan is being implemented effectively.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	4

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the support you gave to Mr Elson and myself when we recently inspected your school. A particular big thank-you to those who met with me to give your views of the school.

We, like you, agree that the school would benefit greatly from a permanent headteacher and we know that the school governors and the local authority are working very hard to grant you this wish. In the interim period, we know that all your staff are trying to do the best they can to support you. However, at this stage, they are not being as effective as they might be. There are weaknesses in the planning of some of the work you are given and the guidance you are given to improve your learning and your behaviour. Because of this, we do not feel that overall you are learning as much as you could do and there are still difficulties with your behaviour. Too many of you find excuses not to be at school or simply not to attend lessons. You are not helping your teachers by doing this. Your teachers are working hard to help you to understand the benefits of being healthy and you yourselves have requested opportunities to go to the gym. However, many of you choose to smoke during breaktimes; you could really help yourselves and improve your health if you tried to stop doing this.

I hope that you will do your bit to help the school improve so that you can all feel safe in school and that you all learn and help yourselves to become better at reading, writing and the other subjects you do, as well as understanding the importance of behaving in a sensible manner.