



Frank Wise School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123332
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292634
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Hornbeam Close
School category	Community special		Banbury
Age range of pupils	2–16		OX16 9RL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01295 263520
Number on roll (school)	92	Fax number	01295 273141
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Doug Seymour
		Headteacher	Mr Kevin Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2001		

Age group 2–16	Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006	Inspection number 292634
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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 or profound learning difficulties. It has Investor in People status and was a Beacon School from 2000 to 2004. Since then, it has continued to work extensively with other schools and has applied for Specialist School status for special educational needs (cognition and learning). Its work has been recognised through a number of awards, including for pupils' achievement, the curriculum, digital video, information and communication technology (ICT) and equal opportunities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that has sustained and built on the many strengths identified at the last inspection. The high expectations and meticulous attention to detail evident in every aspect of the school's work means that it is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in their personal development. The school treats each pupil as an individual and, as a result, pupils flourish, knowing that they really matter. Older and more able pupils are thoughtful and caring towards younger pupils and those with more profound difficulties. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.

All the staff work together as a strong team, instilling in pupils an enthusiasm for learning. As a result, pupils are motivated and respond exceptionally well. Lessons are a hive of purposeful activity, where expectations are high and work is matched closely to the needs of different groups of pupils. The precision with which pupils' needs are identified and their individual targets set are key strengths underpinning the outstanding teaching and the progress that pupils make. Although standards are very low as a result of pupils' learning difficulties, achievement is outstanding throughout the school, including in the Foundation Stage*. The opportunity afforded every pupil to spend at least half a day a week in mainstream school and to go on really exciting educational visits also makes an outstanding contribution to their achievement and personal development.

The school's effectiveness is the result of outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher, senior managers and governors are extremely self-critical and outward looking. For instance, they have forged links with schools overseas, and they continued to support other local schools even when the funding as a Beacon School came to an end. Their commitment to building on the school's strengths is evident in the detailed way they have planned for Specialist School status and in the rigour with which they appoint new staff. Senior managers have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and thorough systems are in place for identifying any areas that could be improved. The high level of effectiveness in all areas means that there is room only for minor refinement. Greater use should be made of data, particularly in analysing more closely pupils' progress. The school does not currently check as closely as it could the impact on pupils' achievement and development of the time they spend in mainstream school and of the experiences they have through going on school trips.

* The Foundation State refers to the provision the school makes for children aged 2 to 5, including within the Assessment Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fine-tune the way the school evaluates its effectiveness, by making greater use of data and by measuring the impact of the full range of learning experiences on pupils' achievement and development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Pupils make exceptionally good progress in developing basic skills in language and communication, mathematics, intellectual and reasoning skills, ICT and personal, social and health education (the school organises its curriculum and sets targets for pupils in these areas). The regular time allocated to working on their individual learning targets means that pupils meet a very high percentage of them, with increasing success year on year. Those pupils who left school in 2006 gained a number of AQA (Accredited Qualifications Alliance) Unit Awards. Older pupils also complete a course that focuses on life skills and developing independence through part-time attendance at college. The emphasis placed on ICT means that pupils throughout the school achieve particularly well in this area. They develop a wide range of skills, for instance, in editing digital video clips, making music using computer programs and publishing their work on the Internet.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Parents say that their children are happy at school and 'cannot wait to get on the school bus'. Pupils really enjoy school and they are motivated and focused. They say that everyone is kind and friendly, and they are sensitive to one another's feelings. Pupils enjoy exceptionally positive relationships with the staff and behaviour is good, sometimes exceptionally so, because any behavioural difficulties are managed very effectively. Pupils are developing a good awareness of healthy living, and have contributed their ideas for improving school meals. They enjoy the very good opportunities to take part in physical exercise and many gain swimming certificates. They trust the staff who work with them and feel very safe in school. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual and moral development and outstanding progress in their social and cultural development. They have good opportunities to take responsibility and all pupils experience the world of work. Some have met with a high level of success in their work experience placements, going on to work full time for the companies concerned when they left school. Pupils make outstanding progress in developing basic and life skills, and gain a great deal of confidence as they move through the school. This stands them in exceptionally good stead for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The teachers all have high expectations and are skilled in the way they motivate pupils. They make exceptionally good use of resources, including the experienced teaching assistants, and are innovative in the

way they use ICT to break down barriers to learning. The school has developed outstanding materials for assessing pupils' precise needs, for instance, for checking those skills that are needed before a child is ready to start reading or before they are able to grasp mathematical concepts. The exceptionally detailed information that this provides enables teachers to devise really precise learning targets for individual pupils. The allocation of a significant amount of time for working on their individual targets ensures that all pupils consistently build on their prior learning. The school has made materials it has developed available to other special schools and primary schools in Oxfordshire.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides pupils with an outstanding range of learning experiences that are matched closely to their personal and academic needs. Pupils have exceptional opportunities to integrate into mainstream school for part of their time. All pupils spend half a day a week in mainstream and some higher attaining pupils spend more time there. This is of enormous benefit to pupils' personal and social development as well as to their academic progress. The curriculum is enriched exceptionally well through educational visits - including trips for pupils aged 11 to 16 to Florence, Barcelona, Rome and more recently to Poland, and through a range of other activities. As part of the school's work towards the Eco Silver Award, pupils took part in a week where they learned about the environment. They have worked with artists in residence and had their work in design and technology brought to life through links with commercial firms. Pupils turned the re-creation of great sporting moments at locations far and wide into a film and speak with pride about how this was premiered at a local cinema.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, support and guidance for its pupils. Very detailed individual care plans, produced in consultation with parents, direct the work of all the staff. The school liaises very closely with the mainstream schools pupils attend for part of the week and ensures pupils are very well supported during this time. It also works in very close collaboration with parents, colleges and other agencies to secure the best possible placement for pupils when they leave school at 16. Pupils are regularly informed about how well their children are doing and as pupils move through the school, they become increasingly involved in reviewing their own progress, in putting together their records of achievement, and in planning for time spent at college. The school has thorough systems in place for protecting its pupils, and uses innovative methods to ensure pupils work in a calm environment where inappropriate behaviour is kept to a minimum. It does this by matching rewards to the specific interests of each pupil.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding, based around a central principle of valuing every pupil as an individual. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have a very clear vision for the school, evident for instance in the exceptionally thorough planning for Specialist School status. All the staff work with commitment and an enthusiasm for making the school as good as possible. Staff at all levels have exceptionally good opportunities to extend their skills through training. A number of teachers, including some senior managers, first joined the school as teaching assistants. The school has excellent links with a number of other educational establishments and provides much-valued support to local mainstream schools.

All staff with management responsibilities make a strong contribution to monitoring and improving the school's work. Weekly sessions, where staff meet to discuss specific aspects of teaching, contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that best practice is shared amongst the staff. Governors make an exceptionally strong contribution to the school. They collect information for themselves and ask probing questions to assist them in decision making, as well as being very closely involved in school development. The school has very thorough systems for monitoring the quality of teaching, planning and the progress pupils make against their individual targets. However, in judging its effectiveness, it does not make as much use as it should of overall data or formally analyse the impact of some of the learning opportunities provided for pupils.

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

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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	1
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

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit very much and would particularly like to thank those of you who talked to me about the school. Now, I am writing to let you know about what I found.

This is an outstanding school. You are cared for exceptionally well and make really good progress in your personal development. The school treats each of you as an individual and makes it clear that you matter. All the staff work together very closely, and it was lovely to see how they help you to be enthusiastic about learning. The teachers know how to make learning fun so that you want to work hard and they are especially good at matching your individual targets to the next steps in your learning. As a result, you are making outstanding progress and you do extremely well in ICT, which I know you particularly enjoy.

The headteacher, senior managers and governors all lead and manage the school exceptionally well. The school is always very careful when it appoints new staff, to make sure that everyone who works there is of top quality, so that they can provide you with the very best. The headteacher and governors want to make the school as good as it could possibly be. They already check very carefully how much progress you are making against your targets and they are always looking for ways to make teaching better. There is not much more they could do to improve the school but I have asked them to use a bit more information when they check how effective it is. You can help them to make sure the school goes on being outstanding by trying really hard in your lessons and continuing to be really kind to one another.

Yours sincerely

M Goodchild

Lead Inspector