

# Barley Lane School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 113636           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Devon            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 325848           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 11 December 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Steffi Penny HMI |

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

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Special                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                     |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 8–15  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Boys  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School (total)                            | 37  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                            |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Fred Browning                                 |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | M MacCourt                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 18 September 2006                             |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Barley Lane<br>St Thomas<br>Exeter<br>EX4 1TA |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01392 430774                                  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01392 433193                                  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

All pupils who attend the school have statements of special educational needs for severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The majority of pupils are boys from White British backgrounds and their attainment is often well below national averages because their education has been disrupted by their behavioural difficulties. The substantive headteacher has been in post since January 2008. When the school was last inspected in September 2006, it was judged to require special measures.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Nevertheless, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards of pupils' work and their achievement in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), English and particularly in literacy.

The legacy of low standards and underachievement is a direct result of a significant period of very weak provision together with inadequate systems to track pupils' progress over time. Good assessment systems are now in place to provide accurate information about pupils' progress. This means that teachers are able to identify more quickly those who are underachieving and take action to deal with it. For example, until this September, pupils have only been entered at entry levels in Key Stage 4. Through the use of the new assessment data and benchmarking the school has seen that this resulted in a lack of challenge for some pupils. It has introduced GCSE into the curriculum at Key Stage 4 so that these pupils have the opportunity to reach their potential. The school is also looking at increasing the range and level of external accreditation for all pupils. However, the plans for this action have not been instigated fast enough to have a significant impact on increasing pupils' future options in further education or training.

The successful promotion of pupils' personal development is one of the key features of the strategy to improve the school's performance. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were previously a great cause of concern. During the inspection pupils' enjoyment of learning was evident in most lessons. The general willingness to learn, coupled with improvements to teaching, account for pupils' improved attitudes to school. This is a major transformation since the last report in 2006 and is indicative of the school's capacity to improve. When new pupils joined the older year groups in September there was a brief increase in very poor behaviour that the school quickly sorted out. The increase occurred because not enough consideration was given to ensuring that new pupils were integrated at a pace that could be easily sustained by the school. The school and local authority are aware of this and are working together to ensure that it does not happen again.

Teaching and learning have in the past been inadequate but are now satisfactory as a result of the action taken by the school's leaders. However, inconsistencies remain in the quality of marking and the expectations of what pupils can achieve. Through better professional development, including working with local secondary schools, teachers are now more able to benchmark the standards that pupils reach against the National Curriculum levels. Recent improvements in teaching mean that the progress pupils make in lessons is accelerating and is often at a good rate. Pupils now have targets, which they are aware of, and this is aiding their understanding of how they can improve their work. Even so, overall effectiveness remains inadequate because there are significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills that hinder their future life chances.

The capacity of leadership and management to bring about improvements in the quality of provision has been severely hampered by considerable staff changes and illnesses in recent

years. The arrival of a permanent headteacher in January 2008 has led to strategies being put in place that are beginning to eliminate underachievement, which means that leadership and management are satisfactory as is the capacity for further improvement. The headteacher and governors are not complacent and realise there is still much more to do.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' achievement in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), English and particularly in literacy.
- Introduce more quickly a greater range of external accreditation, including that which enables pupils to attain qualifications at higher levels.
- Work closely with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that the integration of new pupils is carefully planned and does not cause disruption to the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' progress over time has been unsatisfactory because of a lack of challenge in teaching and in the targets set to help pupils improve. Although progress is now improving weaknesses remain, particularly in the progress made in literacy across the curriculum. This has meant that by the time pupils leave standards are very low and not enough pupils have the qualifications they are capable of attaining.

The senior management team is addressing the causes of underachievement, including a legacy of inadequate teaching and learning, and, most importantly, the inconsistencies in the expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is starting to make a difference. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who have made satisfactory or good progress over the last term.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Throughout the school day pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their own attitudes, explore each others' feelings, and make a fresh start if something has gone wrong. When given responsibilities, such as being on the school council, pupils are proud that what they say is taken seriously by the school. Changes have been made that reflect their views, for example the creation of a healthy 'snack bar' at break time. Consequently, contribution to the school community through the school council is good. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of their local community and that of other cultures. Community cohesion is an area that is developing through the recent changes to the curriculum to include 'world studies'.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in sport, which they enjoy enthusiastically. They are knowledgeable about the importance of healthy eating and how to keep safe. Pupils say that one of the very best features of the school is the homemade school lunches, particularly the roasts, and the care and support they get from all adults at lunch times.

Pupils' good attitudes to school have been considerably strengthened by the increase in interesting and challenging lesson activities. This has resulted in a boost in levels of attendance and a decrease in poor behaviour.

Pupils' low standards of attainment do not prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Nevertheless, their improved and now satisfactory attendance and good behaviour,

along with the work-based learning and work placements pupils undertake, set the groundwork for preparing them for adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning have greatly improved and are now satisfactory overall. School records and lessons observed show that good and imaginative teaching occurs in all year groups. Teachers regularly check to see how well pupils are doing and, in the best lessons, provide harder work for those who find learning easier. However, good practice is not consistent across the school. There are still a few lessons where the teachers' expectations are not high enough and work is not sufficiently challenging for the different abilities within the class. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has taken recent steps to improve the curriculum and it now meets the needs of pupils more effectively. Much greater use is made of interactive whiteboards and the improved ICT provision is making a big difference in capturing pupils' interest. Not all opportunities are exploited sufficiently to increase pupils' literacy levels.

The school provides a more stimulating curriculum, for example through GCSE courses to consolidate and extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of the world. Leaders have investigated other types of external accreditation but the plans to increase the range are not being implemented fast enough. This means that pupils leave the school without the qualifications they need to access further education or training.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

This school provides well for pupils' safety and welfare, fully complying with government guidelines for these aspects. Pupils feel they can seek help when they need it, that staff will respond positively, and that any problems will be dealt with effectively. The most vulnerable pupils are very well supported by the school, although there is less evidence of inter-agency work with regard to therapy aspects than might be expected given the learning needs of the pupils.

Academic support and guidance for most pupils are satisfactory. Until recently, their progress was not tracked rigorously enough to ensure that challenging targets were set to help them improve. However, all classrooms have displays that show the standards that pupils are working towards in relation to the National Curriculum levels. In one lesson a pupil challenged the teacher about the level he was working towards. The pupil wanted to show the teacher that he had reached the next level; which he had. This is indicative of the keenness that is growing amongst the pupils to be able to perform to higher standards. The use of the new reward system for learning in each lesson is making a big impact on getting pupils to concentrate in class.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leaders and managers have brought about good improvement in pupils' personal development, although they have not been sufficiently successful in the past in improving pupils' achievement. This is partly a result of staff changes and absences, but it is also due to a lack of aspiration by some staff for how well pupils could achieve. Consequently, improvement targets were not challenging enough to bring about higher achievement. Recent development plans are effectively focused on raising this achievement. The school recognises that much more needs to be done and is working hard to address this. For example, new systems are in place for regular and rigorous checking of pupils' progress, and more challenging targets have been set. These developments indicate the school is on the right track to bring about the necessary improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels have not ensured that all staff have been kept up to date with current practice for the teaching of literacy across the curriculum.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties and are well informed. They are fully involved in development planning and, with the better information they now receive on how well pupils should be doing, are increasing their role in holding the school to account for its performance to ensure rapid improvement. The governors and the headteacher have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

**Overall effectiveness**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4   |
| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 3   |

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 3 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| 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 learners' needs?</b>       | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 3 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 4   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 3   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 3   |
| 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  | 3   |
| 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?  | Yes |

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barley Lane School, Exeter EX4 1TA

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave me recently when I inspected your school. I particularly appreciated the discussions that I had with some of you and am grateful to you for helping me with my work. I am writing to tell you what I found out during my visit, although you can always read the full report yourselves at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Barley Lane School has improved considerably since the last inspection and your work is beginning to improve, but there is still a long way to go. I think your school still needs some extra help and have decided that it requires something called a 'notice to improve'. This means that your school will continue to get help from other people and another inspector will come to see how well you are all doing in about six months time with another inspection in about a year.

There are more good lessons now than there used to be. This is because the staff have worked hard to make them interesting and relevant to the real world around you. They have been able to do this because you are behaving better in class and not distracting each other so much from your learning.

You said that you found your targets useful and they gave you something to aim for. Some of you need to have harder work in class and be entered for external examinations at a higher level. I have asked the school to make sure that you all get work that is at the right level for you.

The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and listens to your views in order to make the school even better. Staff at the school and other adults who come to help and support you are doing a good job at helping you become responsible young people. They are looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be. I have asked them to make sure that when other boys join the school that you can all behave and learn well.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful during the visit. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best.

Wishing you all a happy and successful future.

Yours faithfully

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector