

Barley Lane School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113636
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338207
Inspection dates	12–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Vanessa Newcombe
Headteacher	Mr Michael MacCourt
Date of previous school inspection	0 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited eight lessons, held discussions with the chair of governors, staff and groups of students. He observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence, including students' books and records of their progress, curriculum documents, the school's improvement plan and eight parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the development of students' literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- the use of assessment information by teachers to improve students' learning
- the range of courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11, and opportunities for students to learn about different cultural and religious traditions
- students' attendance and arrangements for following up absences
- the school's success in maintaining its capacity to improve given recent staffing changes.

Information about the school

Barley Lane School provides education for boys who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Students generally join the school with low levels of numeracy and literacy and all have a statement of special educational needs. All are of White British origin and almost all have English as their home language. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is much higher than the national average. Students are drawn from a wide catchment area within Exeter and the surrounding area. Several staff changes occurred in the term prior to the inspection. When the school was last inspected in December 2008, it was judged to require significant improvement due to students' low achievement and standards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Barley Lane is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Students' achievement is now satisfactory and attainment has risen markedly following the introduction of a suitable range of GCSE and vocational courses. Students' attainment remains low, but their learning and progress are satisfactory and improving rapidly.

Teaching is satisfactory. Well-established classroom routines and varied activities are successful in promoting a positive climate for learning. As a result, students generally enjoy coming to school and show interest in their work. Assessment information is used regularly to check pupils' levels of attainment. However, this information, particularly regarding students' literacy skills, is not used consistently to match work closely to each pupil's level of ability. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support students' learning. Students feel safe due to the high quality of care and concern shown by staff. They have a good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle which is promoted well by the opportunities for physical exercise and personal, social and health education. The consistent approach to managing students' behaviour and a popular reward system help to promote students' good behaviour. Too few opportunities exist for students to take responsibility in the school and wider community or to develop their knowledge of the different religious beliefs and cultural traditions in the United Kingdom. This limits their independence and their understanding of groups in wider society. While attendance is satisfactory overall, a small number of students do not attend regularly despite the school's best efforts to engage them.

The school is particularly successful in establishing a close relationship with parents and carers. Strong links with other partners, for example the youth service, Connexions and other schools and colleges, have been successful in extending the curriculum.

The headteacher's dedicated leadership and highly visible presence around the school underpin its improved performance. He has been successful in raising expectations and engaging staff in a drive to improve students' achievement. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school improvement plan has appropriate priorities for moving the school forward, although targets are sometimes quite broad and it is not always clear how the success of initiatives will be measured. The role of subject leaders is underdeveloped and as a result some aspects of the school's work, especially literacy, are not coordinated effectively across the school. The governing body ensures statutory requirements are met and it has supported the headteacher in raising standards. Visits

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by governors to the school to monitor its work first-hand are limited and there are plans to extend this aspect of its work. Despite recent staffing changes, the school has maintained the pace of improvement in teaching, students' learning and in the curriculum. This demonstrates that the school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - using assessment information to plan lessons which match work closely to students' individual levels of ability
 - ensuring there is a consistent approach to developing literacy skills in subjects across the school.
- Improve students' personal development by:
 - providing them with a greater knowledge of the different religious beliefs and cultural traditions across the United Kingdom
 - increasing opportunities for them to take responsibility in the school and wider community
 - ensuring the small number of persistent absentees receive a suitable programme of education.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders by ensuring that there is clear responsibility for each subject and that initiatives are coordinated more effectively across the school
 - setting more precise targets for priorities contained in the school improvement plan and establishing how the success of initiatives will be evaluated
 - extending the governing body's knowledge of, and arrangements for monitoring, the school's work.
- The provision of education for persistent absentees should be seen as an urgent priority. Other improvements should be implemented by the end of the summer term 2010.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students join the school with levels of numeracy and literacy which are lower than expected for their age. Almost all have experienced difficulty settling to work in their previous schools. Despite their previous difficulties, all students left Barley Lane in 2009 with some accredited qualifications from a range of GCSE, Entry Level and vocational courses. While students' attainment is still below national expectations, the school's increased emphasis on raising standards has had a marked impact on raising students' aspirations. All leavers moved on to a suitable destination in further education or training. Students' learning and progress in the classroom are satisfactory for all groups

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of pupils. They particularly enjoy the practical aspects of learning. For example, during the inspection, students were pleased to describe an experiment they were conducting in science and to show a PowerPoint presentation they had prepared in ICT. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to help students develop their writing skills. However, a consistent approach to developing literacy across the school is lacking, which slows the rate of progress of those students with more pronounced writing difficulties.

Almost all students enjoy coming to school because they learn to experience success and improve their self-esteem. They share their experiences and recognise each other's achievements in daily assemblies. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour do occur; however, these are dealt with effectively and are not allowed to interrupt the smooth flow of lessons. Given that students are referred to the school because of their behavioural difficulties, this represents good progress in their social development. Several older students complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, although there are not enough other opportunities for students to demonstrate initiative and take responsibility.

Attendance is satisfactory and has improved markedly for the large majority of students in the past year. A small number of students do not attend school full-time and they have been given a range of part-time programmes and the use of other centres to provide education and training. However, some of these students have a history of non-attendance and it has proved difficult to secure their full-time return to learning. Despite students' low levels of numeracy and literacy, their acquisition of ICT skills and progression to suitable destinations when they leave ensure they receive a satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A strong emphasis on learning and clear classroom routines ensure students settle quickly to their work. Teachers use praise and the reward system consistently to recognise effort and achievement. They select interesting resources and topics to stimulate interest. Occasionally, insufficient time is allowed to review what students have learned and to encourage them to share their ideas with others in the class. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution in many lessons by helping individual students who struggle with their work. In a few lessons, too much help is given and students are not encouraged to take sufficient responsibility for their own learning; for example by taking out equipment themselves. Teachers use assessment information systematically to gain an accurate picture of students' levels in each subject. They frequently remind students of the next steps they need to complete to attain a higher level. Occasionally, students are encouraged to reflect on and assess each other's progress. A good example of this was observed in a physical education lesson when students learned new basketball skills. However, assessment information is not used consistently to plan lessons and consequently activities do not always take sufficient account of each student's individual level of ability. This limits the progress of some students, particularly in literacy. The marking and presentation of students' work are satisfactory. Positive comments are generally evident, although suggestions for improvement are not always followed up.

The curriculum has improved in the past year and the school has been successful in working with local colleges and community providers to extend the range of courses on offer. This includes accreditation in basic numeracy and literacy skills and additional vocational courses which are particularly appropriate to the students' needs. A relevant programme of personal, social and health education is in place containing topics which emphasise the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Some areas of the curriculum are not yet developed fully such as the promotion of basic skills across different subjects and a programme to promote students' knowledge of different religious and cultural traditions. Students report they feel safe and respond positively to the family atmosphere in the school. Staff know individual students well and treat them with respect. They receive appropriate training in behaviour management and deal calmly and effectively with challenging situations. Incidents of significant misbehaviour are recorded in detail and have declined sharply in the past year. Students recognise how the climate in the school has improved. In the words of one: 'There used to be a lot of poor behaviour, but it's got a lot better. You can't get away with things now.' Attendance data are analysed thoroughly and the school has worked closely with the education welfare service to

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provide an appropriate education for the small minority of absentees; albeit with mixed success. Effective links with the Connexions service ensure students receive good preparation for when they leave. Links with other agencies, for example social services and the youth service, are well established.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in moving the school forward quickly since the last inspection, primarily through raising expectations. They analyse data to check the performance of different groups and are aware of strengths and areas for improvement. However, subject leaders' roles are not yet developed sufficiently to enable them to play a full part in this work. Also, while teaching and learning are regularly monitored, monitoring sometimes lacks a focus on whole-school improvement and does not always result in a clear plan of action. The school is successful in ensuring equality of opportunity for the large majority of students who attend regularly. Its focus on raising achievement is seen as key to improving the life chances of low-attaining boys who experience behavioural difficulties. The school has built a close partnership with parents and carers which ensures they understand the work of the school and support their child's education. The school is in regular contact with families, through telephone or home visits, and there is a good attendance at meetings to review students' progress. The school has successfully taken steps to strengthen links with the local community and has a plan to promote community cohesion on a wider level. Students learn about different cultures through 'world studies', but links with different ethnic and religious groups across the United Kingdom are limited. Satisfactory safeguarding arrangements include appropriate policies and staff training. Despite carrying some vacancies, the governing body gives a satisfactory level of support and challenge to the school, primarily through its achievement committee.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold extremely positive views about the school. In particular, they feel well informed about their children's progress, recognise that the school deals effectively with any unacceptable behaviour, regard the school as being well led and managed and are very positive about the overall education provided by the school. As one parent commented, 'This is the first school my son has ever enjoyed and wanted to attend. He has only attended since September 2009 and during this period he has changed so much. I now have a son that is positive about himself and enjoys his education.' Parents and carers raised no concerns during the inspection about the work of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Barley Lane School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 39 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	13	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	75	1	13	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	50	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	38	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	63	2	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Barley Lane School, Exeter, EX4 1TA

Recently, I visited your school to see how well it was doing. I enjoyed my visit and thought the school was a pleasant place to learn. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at the school.

Here are the main points.

- Your school has had difficulties in the past and I am pleased to say that it is much improved.
- The standard of education provided is now satisfactory and improving.
- You enjoy learning because of the interesting lessons and courses on offer.
- Your behaviour is good and you know how to lead a safe and healthy life.
- The school works closely with your parents and carers, who are pleased with the education you receive.
- Your headteacher and staff care for you well and work closely with other adults to make sure that those of you who need additional support get it.

I have asked the school to do a few things to improve it.

- Make sure that teachers in all classes match work closely to your level of ability so that you can make faster progress.
- Get teachers to work together to improve your reading and writing skills.
- Increase your knowledge of different religions and cultures in the United Kingdom and give you more opportunities to take on responsibility.
- Make sure that the small number of you who do not come to school regularly receive sufficient education.
- Make sure that adults running the school check more frequently how well the school is working and draft clearer plans for improving it.

You can help by always trying hard with your reading and writing, offering to take on responsibilities around the school and by showing an interest in different religions and cultures. You can also make sure you attend school regularly and complete any work you are set to do at home.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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