

# Bidwell Brook School

Shinners Bridge, Dartington, Totnes, TQ9 6JU

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities make good and sustained progress from when they start school through to Year 11.
- The sixth form is good. Students are well supported for the next phase of their lives.
- Teachers have high expectations and an increasing confidence in the use of data to measure their pupils' progress. When it is not as good as that expected, additional support accelerates their progress successfully.
- Whatever the level of learning difficulties faced by individual pupils, work is pitched at the right level to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Challenging targets are set for all pupils and are reviewed regularly in close collaboration with parents and carers.
- Staff work together in effective teams and are well-supported by behaviour and other support staff to ensure good learning.
- Challenging behaviour is dealt with effectively because the school's policy is implemented well. This ensures that the school is an orderly community.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are robust.
- The acting headteacher is raising aspirations and standards, helping teachers be more effective.
- Governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, fulfilling all their duties, including safeguarding, in an effective way.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Information on the learning, social and medical needs of each pupil lacks sufficient detail to ensure pupils' smooth transition between different phases of education.
- The role of subject and specialist leaders is not yet fully developed in supporting teachers and teaching assistants to improve their professional skills and in so doing raise achievement still further.

## Information about this inspection

- A total of 10 lessons were observed, covering every class. All were observed jointly with a member of the school’s senior management team. Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at their work and undertook detailed case studies of the progress made by some pupils.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and members of the senior management team, other members of staff with specific duties and responsibilities, representatives of the governing body and pupils.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority who has been involved in working closely with the school over the past decade.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers gathered in the governors’ parent survey undertaken in December 2013. At the time of the inspection there were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to provide a reliable report.
- The views of pupils were gathered from a meeting with the school council and from conversations with pupils during lessons and throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors gained the views of staff from their questionnaire responses and from discussions held during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including data on the achievement and progress of pupils, and the ways they are monitored and tracked, teachers’ assessment and planning, the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning, and a range of policies and procedures, with a focus on those around safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Cook

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bidwell Brook is a school for pupils who have a range of needs that include severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils also have additional, complex needs.
- All pupils are supported through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who attract the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups, such as pupils believed to be eligible for free school meals, or who are in care of the local authority, for example) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language are both well below average.
- An acting headteacher, who is also the headteacher of another special school in the local authority, was appointed in December 2012 and will remain in that role until the conclusion of consultations on forming a federation between the two schools.
- She has also been joined by the deputy headteacher of the same school for the same timescale.
- The governing bodies of the two schools are currently undertaking the necessary consultations around the proposal to merge the two schools, with a single governing body and executive headteacher from Easter 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the transition between phases of education is appropriately managed for all pupils ensuring individual plans are consistent, and contain:
  - full details of pupils' educational, social and medical needs
  - clearer records of the different approaches staff have used to meet the needs of each pupil.
- Provide support and training for middle leaders to enable them to better:
  - model best practice
  - deliver more effective professional development

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Although the attainment of pupils is low because of their wider learning difficulties, they nearly all make good progress from their starting points. Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from very low starting points. Their good progress is recorded effectively in learning journals.
- In Key Stage 1 the school successfully ensures that from the outset its provision meets individual need and that maximising learning is at the heart of its practice. For example, for those able to develop their reading skills there is an effective focus on the use of phonics (the sounds that letters make). This helps those that are able to make good progress in reading.
- As students move through school, teachers enter details into a software package that enables their progress to be accurately measured. Teachers carefully monitor progress so that, whatever the individual starting point, challenge is rigorous. For some this means that progress can be compared to that of pupils in mainstream schools, but for all it reflects good progress from their starting points.
- The school's data show that a large majority are making improved progress by the end of Key Stage 3. They also develop and refine skills in independent learning, communication and social skills.
- By the end of the secondary school phase students gain a range of appropriate external accreditation, reflecting their good achievement. Sixth form provision is good. All of last year's Year 12 and 13 leavers moved to successful places in the local college of further education which makes effective provision for young adults with learning disabilities.
- Senior leaders have rightly recognised that the school is not yet drawing together all the educational, medical and social information it gathers on pupils to ensure a smooth transition between classes and phases.
- The school supports the most able pupils to maximise their potential. This is seen in the progress that is monitored by teachers every term and is reflected in the success they gain in external accreditation, not only in the key areas of English and mathematics, but also in the wider area of communication. The school rightly identifies communication as being central in all its work and to the hopes of many parents and carers for their children. The progress made by students is a reflection of the good teaching they receive.
- Communication is promoted effectively through a variety of ways including the use of pictures, symbols and switches.
- The school monitors individual progress with care. There is no difference in the progress of identified groups, such as boys and girls, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who speak English as additional language.
- Central to progress and achievement is the home-school agreement which identifies clear targets, monitored on a termly basis, in which the school and the family collaborate in order to maximise progress and set challenging targets.
- All targets are in line with requirements in statements and a 'Progress Chaser' was appointed in early 2013 to ensure implementation. This includes working with staff in school and other agencies that provide support, and with families to ensure that needs are being met and agreed actions carried out.
- Reading is promoted well for those who are able, including the effective use of phonics which supports good progress.
- The pupil premium funding is targeted well ensuring pupils who receive support make progress at least in line with their peers. The Year 7 catch-up funding is similarly effective in supporting pupils moving into Key Stage 3.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is typically good from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form and some is outstanding. Teachers are very effective in supporting pupils so that they sustain their good progress as they move through the school. Teachers have high expectations and use pupil data well to measure their progress and ensure activities match the level at which pupils are working.
- Teachers and teaching assistants constantly look for, and record, evidence of pupils' progress so that even the smallest steps are noted and add to the clear picture of progress.
- Lessons and subjects that are taught are effective in enabling all pupils, whatever their physical or learning difficulties, to gain access to learning in ways that are engaging and support progress. While literacy and numeracy are a primary focus, communication and independence skills are also seen as crucial.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to clarify what pupils understand. The most effective teaching assistants also use questioning effectively and form highly effective teams with teachers, planning together and supporting pupils in successful learning.
- Pupils enjoy their learning, readily engaging at their own level. There is a wide range of academic and physical ability in every class and for those with the most extreme difficulties the good use of technology is an effective way of supporting learning.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning, focusing on English, mathematics and communication. There is also good use of specialist facilities in subjects such as art, music and food technology. This promotes practical and artistic skills very well.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. The governing body has worked effectively with the support of the acting headteacher and the child protection team of the local authority to review child protection procedures and policy. These are now robust and all staff have received detailed training to ensure pupils are safe.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Issues, including internet safety and the dangers of the misuse of personal networking sites, are covered well during lessons on personal, social and health education.
- Pupils confirm that everyone gets on very well together and that bullying is not an issue. However, they develop an understanding of bullying and its different forms, including cyber bullying. Pupils enjoy school and say they feel very safe.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Many pupils display very challenging behaviour as a result of their learning difficulties. The school's clear and effective behaviour policy enables this to be dealt with effectively. During lesson observations no time was lost to learning as a result of behaviour and, over-time, support for promoting positive behaviour has been a priority.
- The behaviour support team provides excellent support to pupils and staff. The focus on supporting effective communication and decision making within a framework of mutual respect promotes positive behaviour.
- Staff are all trained in using restraint as a last resort and, when it is used, it is logged carefully. Staff are skilled in de-escalation of potential incidents so, consequently, incidents are rare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well in the school, such as through art and music. A particular strength of this work is the way in which pupils are encouraged to collaborate and work together, supporting each other in a range of positive ways.
- Attendance has improved over the last year since the arrival of the acting headteacher because pupils enjoy going to school. It is in line with attendance at special schools nationally.

**The leadership and management** are good

- The acting headteacher has a very clear vision, shared by other senior leaders and increasingly by staff. Senior leaders support pupils and teachers in doing their very best. The school works successfully in very close partnership with families to ensure the best possible provision. Higher expectations have resulted from opportunities to share best practice between the two schools in the proposed federation, for example, which have raised the effectiveness of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are successfully transferring the good practice from their original school to Bidwell Brook. They have brought a renewed focus on improvement to other members of the Bidwell Brook leadership. Those existing senior leaders are fully committed to integrating this best practice into the existing structures of the school to enable it to become even better. For example, effective self-evaluation identifies accurate areas for development and this enables the school to prioritise areas for improvement.
- The leadership of subject and other aspects is improving. Senior leaders rightly recognise the importance of improving school effectiveness even further, through modelling best practice and leading professional development.
- Previous weaknesses in implementing key policies around safeguarding have been addressed with effective support from the local authority. Evidence now points clearly to pupils being safe at school, supported by effective policies and procedures
- Arrangements to monitor the impact of teachers and teaching assistants through the systematic checking of teaching, planning and assessment are rigorous. This ensures good teaching and learning and also forms part of detailed arrangements for managing the performance and professional development of staff. As a consequence the identified priorities for moving the school forward as well as for meeting individual professional development are firmly in place.
- The local authority has provided strong support, for example, in helping the school review and improve its safeguarding practices, and to support the appointment of the acting headteacher.
- Since the change in leadership plans are now in place to bring in coaches to work alongside teachers to help them develop sustainable plans for enhancing physical activity.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Individual governors take specific responsibilities for areas of teaching and learning. The governing body has a clear understanding of information on pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning. It monitors the financial situation well, including the impact of the targeted spending of the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding. They have benefited from training, with the local authority giving effective support. There are clear systems for the management of staff pay, and governors understand and implement the links between pay and performance, including arrangements for tackling underperformance. They are aware of how their school performs in comparison with similar schools. They carry out their legal duties, including those for safeguarding, and challenge senior leaders to do their best very effectively.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113643
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	440377

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	24
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tony Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqui Warne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 864120
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