

# Bettridge School

Warden Hill Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 3AT

## Inspection dates

1–2 February 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders place pupils at the heart of this school. The headteacher is passionate about providing the very best education for the pupils it serves. She is relentless in her pursuit to further improve Bettridge School.
- Staff are highly motivated and determined to equip pupils with the necessary skills, preparing them well for their next steps.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are extremely strong. This allows pupils to build trust with adults to help them feel safe and secure.
- Staff are vigilant in their approach to the welfare of pupils and safeguard them effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their learning from often extremely low starting points. However, a more consistent approach by leaders in checking the quality of teaching would support teachers in further improving their practice.
- The school's drive to develop pupils' communication skills is pivotal to their good progress and in their social development.
- The curriculum is personalised to meet the needs of each pupil. It is complemented by a wide range of enrichment activities to which pupils have access.
- The school provides pupils with a range of high-quality therapeutic provision. This is making a positive difference to pupils' physical and emotional development.
- Students make good progress on the 16 to 19 study programmes as a result of good teaching. However, changes made to the curriculum and assessment have only recently been introduced and are not yet embedded.
- Behaviour is typically outstanding around the school and in lessons. Pupils are aware of what is acceptable behaviour. They have positive attitudes to school and enjoy all that it has to offer.
- Governors play an active role in the school. They effectively challenge and support leaders to ensure that the learning and emotional needs of pupils are being well met. However, leaders and governors do not always check precisely enough what is working well and why.
- The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils are provided with the best possible support for their academic and emotional development.
- Most parents speak positively about the work of the school. There are, however, a few parents who have concerns around aspects of provision.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - development plans set clear targets which focus on pupil progress and that there are regular opportunities for leaders and governors to check more precisely what is working well and why
  - leaders consistently implement the school's agreed approaches to checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- Further improve 16 to 19 study programmes by embedding the new curriculum and assessment processes so that students make the best possible progress.
- Improve engagement with parents to help them better understand the work of the school and how they can help their child's learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- 'An inspirational leader' is how governors describe the headteacher. Her passion and resolve for the school to be the best that it can be is unwavering. She has an in-depth understanding of the complexity of each pupil's needs and empowers her team to deliver the best possible outcomes.
- Leaders ensure that each pupil benefits from a personalised learning programme, carefully planned to attend to their complex needs. The school's approach to providing the correct balance of education, therapy and care supports pupils to achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of subjects, which strongly focus on developing key skills in English and mathematics. Extending and improving pupils' communication skills is at the core of the school's provision. Staff work relentlessly to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The sports premium funding is used well to enhance pupils' experiences. For example, pupils enjoy activities such as yoga, which helps them better manage their behaviour. Pupils relish the range of activities they have access to, including swimming, dance, skittles and horse riding.
- School leaders use funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. They plan specific activities, and purchase appropriate resources to support learning. Consequently, there is no difference between the achievement of these pupils and others in the school.
- Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are threaded carefully throughout the curriculum. Staff show pupils, through their own actions and manner, what it is to get along and work well together. In this way, pupils are encouraged to play their part, developing the social skills and attributes they need to be tolerant and understanding of other people's differences, appropriate to their stage of development.
- Leaders have clear procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, holding teachers to account for the quality of education and care they provide for pupils. However, this is not sufficiently rigorous to bring about sustained improvement for pupils. Targets set for teachers do not include planned regular checks to enable leaders to evaluate the difference actions taken to improve pupil progress.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has, in the last year, focused on providing post-16 students with a high-quality learning environment. Consequently, leaders recognise that the rigour with which other monitoring activities have been undertaken has not been sufficient to ensure that sustained pupil progress is being consistently maintained across all key stages.
- The leadership team has drawn up action plans to improve the education and outcomes for all pupils. However, leaders and governors do not check precisely what is working well and why.

## Governance of the school

- Governors bring a high level of skill and professional expertise to inform and enrich the school's development. Governors understand the information, which they are presented with clearly, and use it to inform school development plans. However, governors do not always challenge leaders robustly to ensure that pupils are consistently making the best possible progress.
- Finances are closely monitored, ensuring the financial stability of the school. For example, governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and the positive impact it is having on the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors, along with leaders, are justifiably proud of the recently opened post-16 building which they were deeply involved with from its infancy. From opening, this environment is already having a significant positive impact on the welfare of post-16 students.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in all aspects of the school's work. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Staff receive high-quality training and regular updates on keeping pupils safe. Controversial issues are not dodged. For example, staff have undertaken training on child sexual exploitation. Consequently, staff are quickly able to spot concerns and taken rapid action with confidence.
- Staff, irrespective of their role, know the pupils and their individual needs extremely well. Leaders carefully evaluate the risks involved with an activity, such as when pupils are travelling to the local swimming pool or using the hydrotherapy pool in school.
- Leaders fastidiously monitor all pupils and are assiduous in following up any concerns. They work effectively with outside agencies to minimise the risk of harm to any pupil. Great diligence is shown in staff recruitment and safeguarding, and records are detailed and of high quality.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Good teaching is underpinned by teachers' high expectations and their deep knowledge of what each pupil can do and understand. Teachers typically use this good knowledge to plan learning that effectively meets the needs of most pupils. High expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning enable pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers build highly effective and trusting relationships with pupils. They plan tasks to carefully meet the individual needs of pupils, enabling pupils to develop skills to tackle a range of activities. As a result, most pupils make at least good progress. For example, a younger pupil demonstrated determination and perseverance when independently constructing a train track. When successful in completing this task, he was clearly delighted in his achievement.
- Teachers plan work across the curriculum to develop skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This was exemplified in a task that older pupils had recently experienced. They took full advantage of the opportunity to go out into the community to collect unwanted furniture to upcycle. This required careful planning and preparation by

pupils. They were able to demonstrate their strong communication and mathematical skills, clearly understanding the importance of money and, as one pupil described, 'the importance of making money'. This work successfully prepares pupils for the next stage of their education or employment.

- Interesting and engaging activities interest pupils and capture their imagination. For example, in a key stage 2 dance lesson, pupils were engrossed in their African dance routine. High-quality demonstrations by adults enabled pupils to excel, irrespective of their disability.
- Teachers and therapists set detailed, aspirational learning targets to help pupils secure small steps in their learning, personal development and behaviour. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, feedback given to teachers is not always linked precisely enough to improving pupils' learning. It is too generalised, with less emphasis on improving pupils' individual achievement.
- Teachers place a high priority on developing pupils' communication skills. This is a strength of the school. Staff successfully use a range of communication techniques and devices to question and challenge pupils in their learning. Processing time is used effectively to enable pupils to think and respond.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils trust their teachers because they quickly build strong and effective relationships with each other. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in knowing when to intervene and support learning and when to allow pupils to work independently. This enables pupils to acquire new skills and make strong progress. For example, older pupils had been out into the local community taking photographs of their favourite plants. They were able to demonstrate how they could use information technology with accuracy and confidence, taking high-quality photographs and retrieving their pictures to share with adults.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- All staff are trained to recognise signs of harm and abuse. They are diligent and act quickly to deal with any concerns. Daily meetings at the start of the day ensure effective communication across the school team, alerting them to any potential issue which needs a careful eye and close monitoring.
- Pupils know and understand the routines in place to support their learning and personal development, especially important for those pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. The fundamental British values of respect, tolerance and rule of law are understood by pupils at an appropriate level for their age and stage of development. For example, pupils demonstrate high levels of tolerance and an understanding of their differences. This is especially evident at times when pupils have heightened anxiety and become distressed.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They engage with enthusiasm to the learning opportunities provided and, along with staff, are proud of their achievements. For example, in a key stage 1 class, pupils and staff were overjoyed at a

pupil's achievement in an activity, filling the pupil with delight and pride in this significant accomplishment.

- Pupils play their part as caring and active citizens within the school community. For example, older pupils describe how they relish the opportunity to pass the required test to enable them to assist pupils in wheelchairs. This contributes strongly towards their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Many parents speak glowingly about the work of the school, a typical comment being: 'Astounded with what the school has done, amazing work.' However, there were a few parents who expressed concern with regard to pupils' behaviour and safety due to the increase in class sizes. Inspection evidence concurs with leaders' views, including governors, that pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school day starts calmly with smooth transitions from the time they arrive in school. This reduces pupils' anxieties and supports a very positive start to the day. This calm transition is repeated at the end of the school day. As a result, attendance continues to improve and is now just below the national average.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in lessons was exemplary, with pupils eager to get on with their learning. Teachers' deep knowledge and understanding of the needs of each individual enable them to swiftly identify when a pupil is becoming distressed or anxious and needs to take 'time out' from their learning. On such occasions, this is done empathetically and with minimal disruption to learning for other pupils.
- Behaviour is monitored closely to identify patterns and triggers for potential hiccups. Records are detailed and confirm a reduction in the number of physical interventions. Exclusions are instigated as a last resort and when all other avenues have been exhausted. Consequently, exclusions are rare.
- Pupils respond well to the structure of the day. Lessons start promptly and without delay, with clear, well-established routines. Pupils of all ages find their visual timetables particularly helpful in managing the day.
- Break and lunchtimes are calm and sociable occasions. Pupils move around the school calmly, mix happily together and enjoy each other's company. Adults provide good role models for pupils, helping them to develop positive social skills.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' attainment on entry is significantly below that expected for their age, due to their complex needs and disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school's records, including assessments of pupils on entry to the school and work completed by pupils, confirm that pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case in their communication skills and personal development, which is as a result of good teaching.
- Most pupils are at the early stages of development as learners. As a result of the high level of care and support from staff, they quickly learn how to communicate their

needs and desires, such as the need to move from their wheelchair, eat or go to the toilet.

- There is no discernible difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. This is because pupil premium funding is used effectively to precisely meet the needs of these pupils.
- Teachers' skill and detailed knowledge of individual pupils' needs enables them to break down tasks into small steps of learning. Most pupils are provided with activities which precisely meet their needs and, combined with effective teaching, these pupils make good progress. However, when tasks are not tailored so precisely, strong progress is less evident. For example, pupils in key stage 3 are not consistently provided with the appropriate challenge to move their learning forward, such as extending further their understanding of number.
- Pupils' early reading skills enables them to access a range of books. Pupils can express favourite types of books and enjoy listening to stories.
- Pupils are encouraged to keep fit and healthy through regular physical exercise, which many of them enjoy. Staff help pupils to undertake the 'prescribed' exercise designed by therapists. For example, inspectors observed pupils in the hydrotherapy pool. Staff were successful in supporting them to use the water to exercise but also as a means of relaxation.
- During their time in school pupils are helped to increase their level of independence, for example in intimate care, wherever possible. As a result, pupils increasingly manage to use the toilet themselves and to be able to keep themselves, clean, tidy and appropriately dressed.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Leadership of this provision is good. There is a clear vision to promote personal independence and access to college. Leaders have high expectations of both themselves and students.
- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching. Teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of individual students. Students have access to an increasing range of accredited courses and are entered for entry-level qualifications. For example, some students are currently following a NOCN accredited course in Independent Living. Where able, students access entry-level functional skills accreditation in English, mathematics and ICT. Post-16 students have the opportunity to follow a 'Pathways to Adulthood'-based curriculum. This ensures that students are well prepared as they move into adulthood.
- Students' levels of understanding about the world in which they live is often limited due to their complex needs. However, leaders are tenacious, ensuring that students do not miss out on the experiences that other students of the same age would have. The new accommodation provides them with a similar environment to a mainstream college. They have access to a common room and designated areas where they can independently make drinks and socialise.
- Students have good access to impartial careers advice. Staff work successfully in helping and supporting them to identify the next steps for their lives beyond school. As

a result, no student leaves school without being in employment, education or training.

- Leaders have been actively modifying the curriculum and assessment systems to more precisely meet the needs of students. However, these developments are not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure that students make the very best progress.
- Opportunities for work experience are currently being developed. For example, students have the opportunity to attend the local farm shop to familiarise themselves with life beyond the school environment. However, this development is still in its early stages and not yet embedded into the curriculum.



## School details

Unique reference number	115821
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10003677

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Burden
Headteacher	Amanda Roberts
Telephone number	01242 514934
Website	<a href="http://www.bettridge.org.uk">www.bettridge.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:Head@bettridge.gloucs.sch.uk">Head@bettridge.gloucs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2013

## Information about this school

- Bettridge is a community special school for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and/or an education health and care plan.
- The number of children in the early years provision has been below five since the last inspection.
- The percentage of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium is significantly above the national average.

- The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class, all observations were conducted jointly with leaders. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, staff and governors. The inspectors took into consideration the responses of 74 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to listen to their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and four free text messages were taken into account. Inspectors spoke to parents informally at the end of the day. A telephone conversation took place with a parent during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deirdre Fitzpatrick

Ofsted Inspector

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