

# Bower Grove School

Fant Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8NL

**Inspection dates** 11–12 February 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.

- The school is very well led. The headteacher and senior leaders provide a clear vision for improving teaching and learning.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils' progress is accelerating. Progress is faster in English than mathematics due to the focus on pupils' literacy skills.
- The excellent wall displays reinforce teaching, celebrate pupils' achievement and illustrate the wide range of enrichment and sporting activities which help to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem and team spirit in working together.
- Behaviour is good. Staff know the pupils very well and skilfully use a range of planned interventions and rewards to manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- The school works very successfully with local providers of initial teacher training and shares its expertise with mainstream schools through its excellent outreach service.
- Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. This is because of the good guidance and support offered by the staff.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their learning because they have opportunities to develop their understanding of the world through imaginative play and practical activities.
- Pupils' attendance has risen since the last inspection due to the school's positive engagement with families.
- The behaviour and attendance of pupils who are looked after by the local authority are excellent. The school provides high quality care to support pupils' well-being.
- The school runs a highly regarded parent support group for families of pupils, both at the school and those who attend classes in mainstream schools.
- Governors know the school well and are committed to improving it further. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan their lessons to help pupils make rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- Not all middle leaders have a clear role in checking the quality of teaching.
- The analysis and presentation of information on pupils' progress are not always sufficiently clear to help all staff and governors to check if all groups of pupils are doing well enough.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 22 lessons, in both the main school site and the two satellite groups educated at local mainstream primary and secondary schools. Almost all lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two committee chairs, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. Informal discussions were held with groups of learners from each key stage and included listening to pupils read. Playtime, lunchtime and an assembly were also observed.
- There were 25 submissions to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors took account of the school's own surveys of parents and carers. Returns from 70 questionnaires completed by staff were also considered.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, monitoring reports, performance management records, policies on child protection and special educational needs, case studies, pupil premium records, the sport premium action plan, attendance records, governors' reports, safeguarding information, school displays and records relating to behaviour and safety.

## Inspection team

Richard Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional Inspector

David Scott

Additional Inspector

Carol Vant

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bower Grove School is a special school for children and young people with behaviour and learning difficulties. The majority of pupils have complex needs and/or a diagnosis of autism.
- Pupils are generally admitted from nurseries and maintained schools from across Kent. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all of the pupils speak English as their first language. The large majority of pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in care and those with a parent or carer in the armed services) is above average. Thirteen pupils in the school, an above average proportion, are looked after by the local authority. There are no pupils from service families.
- All Year 7 pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Just over 33% of pupils across the school are involved with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as a result of their behavioural needs.
- The school works in partnership with many different bodies and organisations, including the local authority, Mid Kent Learning Alliance Teaching School, Primary Consortium and the Kent Association of Special Schools (KASS).
- In addition to the provision offered at Bower Grove School, a few pupils attend Satellites in a local primary school and a secondary school. A very small minority of pupils on roll at the school receive home tutoring from Write-Trak or attend alternative provisions at Kings Reach and Horizons which offer a more individually tailored programme to meet each pupil's needs.
- The school offers a range of accreditations and awards. It does not routinely enter pupils early for public examinations. However, this year one pupil will be entered for GCSE statistics a year early due to being educated with older pupils.
- The school is accredited as a National Vocational Qualification centre and as an initial teacher training provider in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University.
- The school recently gained the Quality in Extended Services, Investors in People, Safety in Action and the Nutritional Standards awards.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding so that all groups of pupils make the best possible progress by:
  - \_ ensuring that teachers' planning is consistently based on information about pupils' prior learning so that their needs are met
  - \_ providing further opportunities for the pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects
  - \_ providing more detailed feedback so that each pupil knows precisely how to improve.
- Strengthen further the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - \_ ensuring that information on pupils' progress is analysed rigorously and presented clearly so that all staff including governors have a clear understanding of pupils' achievement and target-setting
  - \_ providing more training and opportunities for middle leaders to monitor the quality of teaching in the subject areas through coaching and the setting of clear targets for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils enter the school with levels that are lower than expected for their age due to the impact that their special educational needs has had on their learning.
- Across all key stages, pupils' progress over time is good. Pupils achieve well in both academic and practical subjects and in their personal development. The school's information indicates that the proportion of pupils making good progress is accelerating.
- As a result of the good teaching and support for learning, all pupils leave the school with appropriate qualifications and good personal and social skills that enable them to successfully transfer into further education or employment. The school continues to informally monitor the progress of pupils once they have left the school through the regular activities of a club for ex-pupils.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive. They develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and their understanding of the world around them well, through play and investigation. For example, in a lesson about the winter Olympics, children developed their understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics) by calling out the letter sounds for snow.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics because of the high quality resources and good teaching that motivates and engages them in learning. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils enthusiastically constructed a bar graph on the floor using a range of toy vehicles and were then able to use the graph to answer mathematical questions such as 'how many more?' and 'how many less?'
- Achievement and progress in reading are good because of the systematic approach used to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make). However, in most year groups, the school has identified that progress in writing is slower and has put in place plans to improve this through the training of staff in using phonics to support spelling and extend writing.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, including those looked after by the local authority, are making faster progress than their peers, in all subjects, because of the effective support and guidance they receive. Consequently, the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils has narrowed so that there is no difference between their achievement and that of other pupils. The Year 7 catch-up funding is successfully used to support pupils in improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils with autism make faster progress than their peers, particularly in English, as a result of a targeted investment in staff training to support learners with autism. The achievement of the most able pupils is accelerated by their inclusion in mainstream classes for the majority of their schooling.
- Leaders effectively use a range of monitoring outcomes to identify any pupil or group of pupils who are not likely to achieve their targets in English or mathematics. However, achievement is not outstanding because not enough pupils, particularly the most able, make rapid progress over time in both English and mathematics and girls do not achieve as well as boys.
- A small number of pupils spend part of their timetable studying off site. Their rate of progress is good with all providers and is similar to that of pupils in the school. There are effective arrangements for checking the quality of their work and ensuring their safety.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- In all areas of the school, including the Reception and satellite classes in local mainstream schools, teaching is typically good, resulting in good achievement and progress. Some teaching is outstanding but, in a few lessons, teaching requires improvement.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because, at times, planning for teaching focuses too much on the learning activities rather than on what pupils are going to learn. Consequently, this can result in all pupils completing the same task at the same time, with the least able pupils needing

a high level of support and the more able pupils being held back in their learning.

- In the best lessons, teachers' plans were effectively matched to the abilities of the pupils and motivating learning activities and high quality resources, including computers and other technology, were well used. Consequently, the teaching was focused on what individual learners were required to learn and as a result, pupils made good progress. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, every pupil confidently used a laptop with minimal support to write a story from a handwritten planner.
- However, in some lessons, resources are not as well matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils and planning is too focused on the learning activities. As a result, not all pupils are appropriately challenged to make good progress.
- The quality of feedback to pupils, both oral and written, is inconsistent across the school. In the best examples, teachers use probing questions to deepen and check understanding and clearly communicate what the pupil needs to do next in order to make further progress – for example, 'remember to use a capital letter at the start of the sentence'. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not always provide enough feedback to pupils on their learning and written work. As a consequence, pupils do not always have a clear idea of how to proceed in improving their work.
- Teachers use attractive and stimulating displays effectively to reinforce learning and support the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high quality art work celebrates pupils' achievement in all subject areas and several displays around the school remind the pupils of behaviour expectations and the link to merit awards.
- Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are excellent and a strong feature of the school. As a result, there is a positive atmosphere in the school where pupils know that they will be helped when they need it.
- There is a high ratio of support staff to pupils. The quality of support is good. However, assistants are not always deployed effectively to support pupils' learning and, at times, adults can react too quickly when a pupil appears to be struggling. As a result, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to solve problems or develop strategies for making decisions and coping with change.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good because of the effective support that they receive in lessons and around the school. The school strives to give every pupil exciting opportunities to thrive and, as a result, they make good progress in their learning. The positive ethos of the school, supported by the structured reward system used across all year groups, encourages the pupils to behave well throughout the school day. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because some pupils require a high level of adult supervision in order to behave well and engage in learning.
- The majority of pupils attend well. Since the last inspection, attendance has improved and is now in line with mainstream secondary schools and above that of other special schools. The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that pupils attend well.
- There are few incidents of bullying or racial harassment. The school has robust systems for recording and tracking any incidence of poor behaviour and uses the outcomes of its analysis to make appropriate plans to help pupils to improve. Leaders regularly review the impact of the support they offer and, as a result, the use of fixed-term exclusions is reducing because there are fewer incidents around the school. Any minor disruptions in lessons are very well managed by the staff and, consequently, do not disturb the learning of the other pupils.
- Parents and carers of pupils at the school and those who have children in mainstream classes learn about how to support their child's education at home by attending a well-regarded parent support group run by a school governor. They are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school. For example, one parent stated, reflecting the views of many, 'The school is fantastic and has helped my son achieve so much.' Although a very small minority of parents, carers and staff have some concerns about the behaviour of the pupils in the school, inspectors found that pupils

behaved well in lessons, when moving around the school and in leisure activities such as lunchtime clubs and on the playground.

- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and know what to do if they feel unsafe or unhappy. Achievement is celebrated through rewards, assemblies and the excellent displays around the school. Pupils demonstrate positive relationships with each other and with staff and, as a result, are able to work together productively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Rigorous safeguarding practices are in place and staff take the necessary steps to ensure pupils are safe. During the inspection pupils participated in an e-safety assembly which reinforced their understanding of staying safe while using the internet.

## **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, through his passion, energy and commitment, has created a calm ethos where all pupils are given the opportunity to achieve their best, irrespective of their background or past difficulties. He is well supported by senior colleagues and the governing body, who share his commitment to and vision for the school.
- There are good systems in place for staff appraisal. Appropriate targets for improvement are set and are linked with an effective programme of training. Working closely with governors, senior leaders are currently refining the criteria for judging whether a teacher should receive an additional pay award linked to pupils' progress.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because the school does not, as yet, fully involve the middle leaders in the monitoring of teaching and learning and this reduces their capacity to support the teachers through focused coaching.
- The school meets the requirements for safeguarding and has good systems in place to ensure that all staff and governors are aware of, and follow, statutory responsibilities. There are effective risk assessments in place and the school acts quickly to resolve any issues identified.
- The highly effective support and guidance offered to pupils who are looked after is exceptional and has resulted in those pupils making rapid progress and improved attendance. There are good procedures in place to monitor the behaviour and safety of the pupils and, as a result, behaviour has improved over time.
- The local authority has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and improvement needs and provides training to support this. The school works closely with officers in order to share its expertise with teachers in local mainstream schools through a comprehensive outreach service and support for teacher training. The school successfully works in partnership with the local university to support and improve the quality of initial teacher training.
- The school has targeted the use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding appropriately and, as a result, pupils' progress is accelerating. The sports premium funding is focused on improving staff skills and provision for sport and physical education. Opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities – including rock climbing, archery and team games – motivate the pupils to take part in sport.
- The quality of teaching and learning is robustly monitored by the senior leadership team and they use the outcomes from this to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to learn. However, the analysis and presentation of the information on pupils' progress are not sufficiently refined in order to help them to identify the key strengths and issues for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is excellent. Governors meet all their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding. Through their involvement in a wide range of monitoring activities, including discussions with key personnel, governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and improvement needs. For example, the learning and development committee regularly meets with senior leaders to analyse information on pupils' progress and it then uses this to target the focus of governors' visits to lessons so that it has a good

understanding of the quality of teaching. Governors monitor the outcomes of teachers' appraisal and are currently working with the school to further refine the criteria for judging whether a teacher should receive an additional pay award if pupils have made progress in their learning.

- Governors participate in a range of relevant training, including safeguarding and child protection, and use the knowledge gained to challenge the school effectively. For example, they regularly audit the school's behaviour management procedures and incidents logs and are beginning to use benchmark information to compare pupils' outcomes with similar schools. They have an excellent understanding of the use and impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding in raising standards. Governors know how the sports premium is being used and have plans to evaluate its impact in the future. As a result, governors effectively support and challenge the school to improve.

## 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>	119036
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	432061

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alison White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Trevor Phipps
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4–5 July 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 726773
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