

Benton Dene School

Hailsham Avenue, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8FD

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Benton Dene has maintained its outstanding quality of care, behaviour and standards since the previous inspection in 2007.
- From low or very low standards when the pupils first start at Benton Dene, pupils make rapid progress during their time in school.
- Those pupils who benefit from extra funding also make better than expected progress at school.
- The school has an excellent system for checking how well the pupils are doing, and for ensuring that anyone who needs extra help gets it quickly.
- The pupils grow in confidence and develop their abilities to read, write and use numbers for different purposes really well.
- Teaching is outstanding because it helps the pupils make excellent progress in school.
- The pupils' excellent behaviour in and around school helps them to get on very well with each other.
- The headteacher and deputy know exactly what the school needs to do to get better. They share their thoughts and ideas clearly with all staff and governors. This is the prime reason why the school is so successful.
- Governors are adept at holding the headteacher and other staff responsible for the quality of all that the school does for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 part-lessons, which included each class teacher and a number of teaching assistants. All teachers were offered and received feedback from inspectors. The headteacher joined inspectors for two observations and was observed giving feedback to one of the two teachers seen. Although these lesson observations covered all year groups and a range of subjects, particular emphasis was given to literacy and numeracy.
- The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), prior to and during the inspection. In total, there were 17 responses on line, one written response and one telephone call that were analysed as part of this inspection.
- A range of documents was read and meetings held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector also spoke with a local authority officer on the telephone.
- The inspectors listened to a small number of pupils read to their class teacher.
- Inspectors spoke with a significant number of pupils and staff during lessons.
- Inspectors also read 40 paper-based questionnaires returned by staff at the school.

Inspection team

Brian Blake, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jim Bennetts

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Because Benton Dene is a special school catering for pupils with complex moderate learning difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum, it is significantly smaller than the average size primary school.
- Just over half of the pupils on roll are on the autistic spectrum.
- All pupils require specialist extra help with their work, with almost all of them financed through their statement of special educational needs. This proportion of pupils is well above average.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals, or those who have been in care more than six months, and those whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces are eligible for additional funding called the pupil premium. The proportion of these pupils currently at the school is 48%, which is higher than average.
- The school provides advice and support for other local authority schools. Those pupils who have language and communication difficulties are supported by the school's Language and Communication Team.
- The school has nursery provision. One part, Dene Communication Centre, includes children from other settings for two days each week.
- The school is part of a soft federation with a primary and secondary school, and is co-located on the same site as the primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the partnership links with parents by:
 - ensuring that the virtual learning environment (VLE) is regularly updated to include relevant information about pupils' work in the school
 - developing ways of getting parents more involved in contributing to the pupils' progress files and record of achievement folders so that pupils' successes at school and home are celebrated fully.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children joining the Reception class have skills and abilities below, or well below, those that are usual for their age. From this low starting point, over three quarters of them make much better progress than expected. Therefore, by the time they are 11, there is far less of a gap between their performance and that of other children of that age. This applies, in particular, to the pupils' ability to read, write and use number skills.
- Pupils who benefit from extra funding through the pupil premium make slightly better progress than others in the school.
- In the lessons seen, pupils were learning very well. For example, in the Reception class, a pupil with very limited speech was able to move, in a very short time, from using single words to combining two words. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, a boy who had very limited skills when he first came to the school was able to work out the answer to a mental arithmetic question about subtraction of one sum of money from another very quickly.
- The school has an excellent system for checking on how well children are doing and any who fall behind with their work are quickly given extra help.
- A major reason for the rapid progress that pupils make is the confidence that they gain through the care and support of their teachers and the very good relationships within the school.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching throughout the school is impressive because it helps the pupils make excellent progress in their work; this includes the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers are very good at talking with the pupils in lessons and in helping them to complete their work in good time.
- Teachers encourage the pupils to read often. This helps pupils to improve how well they read, how they deal with unfamiliar words and how they recall different story lines. The teaching of writing and different ways to use numbers also helps to improve the standard of the pupils' work because they can write at length and apply some of their work from lessons to everyday life.
- The school collects a lot of very useful information about the achievements and successes of all pupils. The involvement of parents in contributing fully to these records is currently less than it could be which limits the potential to celebrate pupils' successes in school and at home.
- The school uses computers and other technology to help the pupils enjoy their learning, and to make it more relevant to what they experience outside of school.
- The school uses the local authority virtual learning site (VLE) to provide up-to-date and easily accessible information for parents at any time of the day throughout the year. However, some of the information is out of date and not useful enough for parents to be able to find out what work their children are doing at school. A pupils' on-line site, however, is very good and provides really helpful information to parents about their child's progress across most subjects at school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- Staff and pupils get on very well with each other. This helps to create a school where the pupils behave well and where they develop confidence that enables them to work hard and make progress.
- In lessons and when moving round the school, the pupils are sensible and courteous, and generally considerate towards each other.
- Because of their needs, the pupils are sometimes distracted. However, teachers deal with this well and, after a 'cooling off' period, the pupils usually return quickly to their work.
- Attendance is good for a school of this type and exclusions are very rare.

- The school ensures that the children are safe. They are carefully supervised and well cared for by all staff in lessons, in corridors and around the building.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher know exactly what the school needs to do to get better. They share these thoughts and ideas with all staff and governors, thereby ensuring that the work of all teachers is focused on helping the pupils make the best possible progress in their learning.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors are very aware why teaching in the school is so successful. They actively support teachers to get even better by observing their work on a regular basis and by encouraging them to participate in relevant training courses aimed at improving the quality of teaching.
- Staff readily assume personal responsibility for aspects of the school's work, and this shows in the way in which they work with pupils of different ages and in different subjects. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage manage the range of activities very well, and staff use their particular expertise to the benefit of all the children.
- Staff enjoy working at the school and share a common belief in making the pupils' learning as good as it could possibly be.
- The local authority has supported the school in a way that is helpful to governors and staff. It keeps in contact at suitable times, and is rightly allowing the school to develop at its own pace and build upon its many successes.
- Some good links have been established with other schools, including those in the soft federation arrangement, which helps Benton Dene pupils and pupils from these other local authority schools.
- Although a number of parents expressed disagreement with aspects of the school's work when responding to Parent View, other recent surveys carried out by the school and local authority are much more positive. The school is unsure why this should be so, but is rightly intending to follow up these inspection findings to establish the reasons why some parents have concerns about communication, pupils' progress and leadership of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors take their role very seriously and the number of full and separate group meetings is helping them to work really well with the headteacher and staff of the school. Governors know how well the school is doing to help all pupils to improve their work because they get regular progress reports from the headteacher, in addition to making regular visits to see the school at work. Some recent joint meetings between the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have helped to give a clear focus on how the pupil premium is being used. Governors and senior staff are now able to show that those pupils who benefit from this extra funding make slightly faster progress than other pupils. The governors have a good understanding of how well teachers are doing in school in terms of the progress that their pupils make. This helps the governors to assess teachers' performance against the pay they receive accurately.

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

Unique reference number	108655
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	403068

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Jacks
Headteacher	Mrs L Turner
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
Telephone number	0191 6432730
Fax number	0191 6432731
Email address	bentondene.school@northtyneside.gov.uk

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