

# Mulberry Bush School

Abingdon Road, Standlake, Witney, OX29 7RW

**Inspection dates** 6–7 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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.

- Teachers and other staff work exceptionally well together to give pupils excellent opportunities for success.
- The school's stability helps pupils to achieve exceptionally well from their starting points, which are well below those expected for their age.
- The school is an outstandingly safe environment within which pupils learn and thrive supported by the care, patience and encouragement of the staff.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and the school successfully develops their confidence and self-esteem with highly effective personalised support.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The tracking and assessment of pupils' learning, the quality of questioning and teachers' adaptability to the needs of pupils as lessons progress, are all excellent.
- The headteacher is a highly effective leader who, with the support of his senior team and the trustees, has created a highly effective school with an excellent track record of improvement.
- Staff at all levels continually try to find ways of doing things better and there is a very strong commitment to giving pupils a new start.
- The management of teaching and learning, which includes induction, performance management and staff development, has a highly beneficial effect on pupils' achievement.
- The board of trustees effectively monitors the work of the school and ensures that there is a well-targeted strategic plan which serves the needs of the pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all four of the classes, including joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector undertook a range of additional observations, including further brief visits to lessons, the forest school activities, the choir and an assembly.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, the vice chair of the Board of Trustees, other members of staff and a group of pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and monitoring reports, policy documents relating to safeguarding and development plans.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's information about pupils' academic, personal and social development and progress. He also looked at case studies and scrutinised pupils' work.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through emails that were forwarded to the inspector and the nine responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector also took into account responses to the optional staff questionnaires completed at the time of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Paul Scott, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Mulberry Bush School is a residential special school for pupils with a wide range of severe emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. They come from across the country and spend around three years at the school.
- Full-time residential care is provided for 38 weeks of the year. At the time of the inspection all the pupils were residential. The residential element of the school's work was inspected separately earlier this year and judged to be outstanding.
- Around two thirds of pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than average.
- A high proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The Mulberry Bush Organisation is the proprietor of the school and is a charity. The Board of Trustees is the school's governing body.
- The school takes a psychodynamic approach to pupils' behaviour which focuses on understanding the internal causes of different behaviours. A range of professionals supports therapeutic residential care, treatment and education.
- The school provides training and support for other schools and professionals locally and nationally.

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

- Improve teaching even further by making sure that there is a sharper focus on what individual pupils need to do next and checks on their subsequent progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress, particularly in reading, communication skills and the ability to make more positive choices about their own behaviour.
- Pupils join the school with often extreme, challenging behaviour, and most have had significant gaps in their schooling. The psychodynamic approach employed by the school allows a wide range of professionals to work closely with teachers to assess pupils' individual needs and to support them in becoming successful learners.
- Learning for the pupils in Mulberry Bush School is a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week experience. Because all the professional teams work very well together, modelling positive caring, learning and supportive relationships, all pupils regardless of their age, ability, ethnic heritage or previous educational history, make strong and sustained progress over time.
- When pupils join the school their specific needs are assessed and a comprehensive plan is put in place for them. The school checks their progress regularly and records how well they are doing in each subject, as well as in their social and personal development. Data show that although pupils' starting points are well below those expected for their age, they make rapid progress on all fronts.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning significantly improve in their time at the school. Their behaviour improves so much that many go on to join mainstream or other special schools to continue their education. Many pupils make up for any lost learning, develop very positive learning habits and reach the levels of attainment expected for their age before returning to mainstream schooling.
- Pupils successfully develop their skills in literacy and numeracy, helped by the high quality of speech and language support that they receive. Pupils' progress in speaking and listening complements the development of their writing. All this helps pupils to express themselves more effectively, build trust and become more confident.
- The school has developed very effective links with a local primary school and some pupils spend time with their 'buddies' there. This helps them to develop their confidence and prepare for moving on to their next school.
- The school does not receive the pupil premium funding from the local authorities for all of its pupils but the funding it does receive from this source is used effectively in targeting additional therapeutic support to make sure that all groups of pupils make outstanding progress.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- A wide range of professionals work in an impressively well-organised way to bring out the best in the pupils, whom they know very well. Their care for, and nurturing of, the pupils helps them to build positive relationships with adults and each other and to learn to trust others.
- A wide range of planned activities provides pupils with broad and meaningful experiences. Their cultural and spiritual development is fostered particularly well through the celebration of success and achievement and through the musical experience of the choir group. Most pupils choose to join the choir and they enjoy singing with peers and adults in an uplifting, exuberant but self-controlled way.
- The forest school and outdoor work build on the learning that takes place in classes. These activities are particularly effective in helping pupils develop trust and think about how they manage risk.
- Very good lesson planning ensures that there are opportunities for all pupils to be successful, although the focus of learning is not always quite sharp enough to help individual pupils meet their targets during a lesson. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise skills but these are not always used to build as well as possible on learning and encourage more independent work.

- Adults have clear, high expectations of the pupils. Behaviour management is very effective in reducing pupils' anxiety and in ensuring that small concerns do not grow. Pupils are increasingly able to recognise and manage their own behaviour and so continue learning effectively.
- Teachers use questions skilfully to check pupils' learning and are good at adapting their plans in the light of pupils' responses.
- Rewards are used effectively by teachers and support staff. Good work and positive approaches by pupils are suitably recognised. The 'You've Got Skills' rewards are collected by pupils and spoken of with pride. This is motivating and encourages pupils to take an active part in lessons.
- The class teams work very well together. Support is well coordinated by the teacher and care is taken to make sure pupils do not become over reliant on a single adult for support. On a few occasions, support is not used to its optimum and opportunities for assessment and observation to check learning are not used enough.

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

- Pupils arrive in the school with very extreme behaviours. So much so that 80% of learners had been assessed as 'not able to be educated' due to their extreme behaviour. Through the highly effective support and care they receive they make excellent improvements in behaviour during their time at Mulberry Bush School.
- Encouraged by rewards, pupils respond extremely well to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility for their own behaviour. They also respond very well to the support they receive in helping them to understand how they can reduce their anxieties and frustrations.
- The frequency and levels of poor behaviour are radically reduced as a result of the effective measures taken by the school. Pupils' empathy with adults and other pupils develops well. Inappropriate behaviour rarely disturbs learning in classes.
- Pupils' safety is a high priority. Systems and processes used to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded and that their welfare and well-being are promoted are outstanding. They are understood well and are very effective.
- The school's work with parents and carers is exceptionally effective, allowing them to understand what they can do to support their children's progress and bring about better outcomes. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the improvements they see in their children's behaviour and progress in lessons.
- Attendance in the school is high, demonstrating pupils' enthusiasm for learning. There is no unauthorised absence.
- The school team is highly responsive to the individual needs of pupils and how those needs are demonstrated through pupils' behaviour.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher's commitment and determination to ensure all pupils are successful are shared by all his staff. In turn, they are very well supported by a team of professionals who feel valued and who contribute exceptional levels of knowledge and skill to improving the lives of the pupils they work with.
- Morale in the school is high, with staff and other professionals showing great pride in their work. The training team provides excellent professional development opportunities.
- The leadership and management of teaching are very effective and have brought about clear and sustained improvements. This can be seen in the teachers' highly reflective approach. All teachers undertake an excellent induction programme. This ensures a consistent approach to learning across the school and a deep understanding of the therapeutic work that is crucial to helping pupils thrive. Support staff also have extensive opportunities to develop a therapeutic understanding. The school enables them to undertake a foundation degree course accredited by the University of the West of England.

- The organisation is continually learning and, deservedly, is highly regarded in the county and beyond. The commitment to research, outreach work and teacher development, as well as to initial teacher training, demonstrates the way in which the school contributes to society in a wider sense, without detracting from the vital work with its own pupils.
- The social, moral spiritual and cultural development of pupils is extremely strong. Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong and are able to understand and reassess their own moral framework and how they can contribute to society.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Board of Trustees, acting as the governing body, has a clear and bold determination to make a difference not just for Mulberry Bush pupils but for a wide range of other pupils that have had extremely difficult starts to their lives. They challenge and question the schools' leaders, visit lessons and assess the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's successes and continue confidently to develop its strategic direction. Trustees understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, performance management and the accountability of staff.

## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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>

<b>Boarding/residential provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123330
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC013039
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	403523

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>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	22
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	22
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The proprietor
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tim Edwards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andy Lole
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865 300202
<b>Fax number</b>	01865 300084
<b>Email address</b>	alole@mulberrybush.org.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

