

Selworthy Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123943
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359548
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Hayden
Headteacher	Karen Milton
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
School address	Selworthy Road Taunton TA2 8HD
Telephone number	01823 284970
Fax number	01823 336519
Email address	kmilton1@educ.somerset.gov.uk

Age group	4–19
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2010
Inspection number	359548

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 1234 234, or email 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 documentation 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'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by 13 teachers, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, for example assembly, play time, lunch time and students' education at an off-site centre. Inspectors also looked at a range of evidence including data on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents and information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The responses in questionnaires of 43 parents, 58 pupils and 63 staff were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- What is the level of progress of different groups of pupils and to what extent are all able to achieve, particularly those with profound and multiple difficulties and those with needs on the autistic spectrum?
- To what extent is the quality of teaching consistent across the school and how well assessment information is used to plan lessons?
- How is the curriculum organised and how well does it meet the wide range of pupils' needs?
- What is the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its work and how information is used to secure improvement?

Information about the school

Selworthy School provides education for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with needs on the autistic spectrum. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and the majority are boys. The very large majority are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area of Taunton and the county of Somerset. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one class which includes Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children. The school provides extended services which include a breakfast club, an evening youth club, holiday activities, parent workshops and support for families. The school was granted specialist status for cognition and learning in 2009. A major programme of building works has recently been completed.

The school has gained several awards in recognition of its work including, Healthy School Award, Artsmark Gold, Activemark, Sportsmark, ICT mark (information and communication technology), National ICT Excellence Award and International School Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Selworthy School provides a good quality of education. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support ensures pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. In the words of one parent, 'The staff work incredibly hard and creatively to provide opportunities for my child to develop in a loving, caring, supportive environment.' Pupils are very happy in school as demonstrated by their excellent attendance. They are very proud of their school and, in relation to their capabilities, make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle very well and make an excellent start to their education.

The school is extremely successful in working with parents, carers and other partners to extend pupils' education and to promote community cohesion. It has used its specialist school status for cognition and learning very creatively to develop strategies which have improved the management of pupils who display anxious behaviour. Together with the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, this contributes to the outstanding behaviour of pupils in lessons, around the school and in off-site settings.

Standards are low due to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress in their learning relative to their starting points due to the high quality of teaching and carefully-targeted individual support they receive. The school places a very high emphasis on the equality of opportunity of all groups and has introduced very effective strategies to help pupils express their views. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from a good range of sensory experiences. Those with needs on the autistic spectrum learn to manage their anxious behaviour due to the understanding and consistent approach of staff. The school has introduced thorough arrangements for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils, although this information is not used consistently to inform teachers' planning and to maximise pupils' academic learning.

The curriculum contains a very broad range of activities which is very successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is also very effective in ensuring pupils lead extremely safe and healthy lifestyles. The development of pupils' key skills in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) is not always given sufficient focus in planning in the curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 years.

The headteacher provides strong and reflective leadership for the school. She leads a committed staff team that share the school's aims and values. Together with other senior leaders, she has managed the recent building programme very effectively to ensure disruption to learning has been kept to a minimum. Good self-evaluation ensures the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. The arrangements for monitoring teaching are generally good, although in some respects there is a lack of detail in planning for improvement. The governing body monitors the

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

school's performance well, although it does not always receive detailed information on the quality of teaching across the school and how this is being improved. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the school's work which include new systems for recording pupils' progress, improved strategies for managing pupils' behaviour and stronger links with the community. The pace of improvement, combined with the school's use of resources to achieve excellent value for money, demonstrate the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - using assessment information consistently to plan lessons which are matched closely to pupils' levels of academic ability.
- Improve the curriculum by:
 - extending planning to include a greater reference to the development of the key skills of literacy and ICT for students aged 14 to 19 years.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - monitoring teaching and learning with a focus on the use of assessment information and the development of pupils' literacy and ICT skills
 - providing more detailed action plans to secure improvement in teaching and sharing them with the governing body.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils achieve well academically and extremely well personally. A minority of pupils learn to write simple sentences and to access the computer independently, whilst those with more profound needs express their views through the use of Somerset Total Communication, signing, pictures and symbols and switches. Pupils make good progress with their learning in the classroom due to the varied range of practical and sensory activities. Pupils' interest in learning is stimulated, for example, when they search for mini-beasts in a science lesson or collect and compare leaves gathered in a nearby wood. Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are particularly marked in music lessons. During the inspection this was observed when pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were able to communicate their sense of fun and awareness through gesture and the sensitive use of communication aids by staff. Pupils really enjoy coming to school because they feel valued. They make excellent progress in developing their social skills and become much more confident and mature young people by the time they leave school. Those who communicate verbally describe how they take on responsibility around the school, for example by participating in the school council, helping with younger pupils, and organising recycling. Pupils with more profound needs develop a greater awareness of their own senses and of others in the group. Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence are boosted when their achievements are recognised and celebrated in assemblies or when leavers attend the biennial school prom.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support assistants understand the needs of pupils very well. They have excellent relationships with pupils and encourage them to try their best. All staff use their very good knowledge of augmentative and alternative communication to ensure pupils understand the timetable for the school day and that they can contribute in lessons. Lessons are well paced and contain practical and sensory activities which maintain pupils' interest. A calm and purposeful atmosphere exists in all classes and occasional incidents of anxious behaviour are well managed so they do not interrupt learning. Support assistants contribute significantly to pupils' learning because they encourage pupils to do as much as possible for themselves. There are some very good examples of the use of ICT, such as when pupils devise a story using pictures and text and upload it onto Powerpoint, or when pupils explore information on the internet. In some lessons opportunities are missed to use ICT to extend pupils' literacy skills.

Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and recording their progress which include attainment data, photographs and samples of work. There is inconsistency between classes in the use of this information to set targets and to support learning. Good examples occur, especially in promoting pupils' personal development. However, academic targets are not always sufficiently precise and linked clearly to pupils' existing skills. This

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

results in some pupils receiving insufficient challenge and teachers not being able to review accurately what pupils have learnt.

The curriculum provides a very broad range of activities which meet effectively the different needs and interests of all pupils. In recognition of this, the school has achieved several awards. Outdoor learning 'Forest School' activities and a programme to raise pupils' social skills and self-esteem feature prominently in the curriculum. The school also uses the school grounds and a vegetable garden effectively to provide practical opportunities for learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of sensory resources and excellent provision for music. Planning is not yet in place to ensure ICT and literacy skills are developed systematically across the curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 years.

The personal, social and health education programme and physical education curriculum are very effective in helping pupils understand how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle. Activities include daily 'wake and shake' warm-up sessions, a school choir, swimming lessons, hydrotherapy, and outdoor pursuits on residential trips, for example to Exmoor. Excellent links with the local community and after-school clubs enrich the curriculum. For example, one student is very proud of the fact that he is studying a GCSE in art part-time at a local school and others enjoy attending art, football and an evening youth club.

The strong staff teamwork and the close partnership with parents, carers and other professionals underpin the school's very caring and supportive environment. Pupils who can communicate verbally report that they feel very safe and that there is an absence of bullying. The intimate care plans for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. The school has used its specialist status very effectively to make key appointments which have strengthened its support and guidance. For example, the engagement of an educational psychologist has had a significant impact on improving pupils' behaviour and the appointment of a parent family support worker has ensured a consistent approach to communication across the school, home and residential settings. Attendance is monitored closely and the school works closely with parents to ensure that those pupils who have absences due to their medical needs are supported on their return to school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's inclusive style of leadership has helped pupils, staff and parents develop a strong sense of pride in their school. This positive ethos ensures that all pupils are included in the life of the school, whatever their capabilities, and are encouraged to

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

succeed. Leaders at all levels demonstrate high expectations and a strong commitment to improving the school. Some curriculum leaders have assumed their responsibilities quite recently. They have good plans to improve their subjects, although these have not yet had time to demonstrate their full impact on accelerating pupils' academic progress.

The school promotes community cohesion very well, as is demonstrated by its International School Award and its close links with the overseas residential centre and school in Majorca. Links with the local community are extremely strong and the pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour towards each other reinforce the collective school ethos and sense of belonging. Safeguarding arrangements, including risk assessments for individual pupils, are thorough and meet all the requirements. Procedures to keep pupils safe whilst engaged in online learning have been nationally recognised through the ICT Excellence Award.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's work, gained by visiting classes and receiving reports and presentations from staff. Systems are in place to ensure statutory requirements are met and finances are managed prudently. The school uses its resources extremely well. The strengths and skills of staff at all levels are recognised and developed through a comprehensive programme of professional development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff form very positive links with families through the extensive programme of induction. Parents are involved in the assessment of their children and information is used very well to identify children's individual strengths and interests. High expectations, exciting activities and the use of Makaton signing and switches are very successful in engaging children and promoting their learning. The indoor and outdoor learning environments have a very good range of tactile and sensory resources. The excellent leadership ensures that

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

highly skilled staff are deployed well to ensure the different needs of children are all met. The care of children with complex medical needs is consistent and well managed.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Students learn a range of communication, personal, numeracy and vocational skills which prepare them well for leaving. These skills are recognised through their success in gaining qualifications in the National Skills Profile, the Accreditation for Life and Living and the Youth Leadership Award. The sixth form is especially successful in providing for the needs of students on the autistic spectrum who display anxious and sometimes challenging behaviour. Staff have been very creative in organising a good range of off-site learning experiences which uses the local community extremely well to prepare students for leaving school. For example students attend local colleges and a National Trust centre to complete courses in design and technology, horticulture and farm studies. Small enterprise activities and work-shadowing experiences are used to further students' understanding of the world of work.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents hold extremely positive views of all aspects of the school's work. One parent commented, 'My son is now a confident, helpful and caring person and still progressing. Without Selworthy we are certain this would not have happened.' The school works closely with parents as partners in furthering their children's education. Parents appreciate the very high standard of support provided for their children and for families. One parent felt that speech and language therapy should be provided on a more regular basis for their child and the school accepts that this has been an issue in the past. Inspectors noted that

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

the school's recent appointment of a communication specialist is aimed at strengthening provision in this aspect.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Selworthy School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 81 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	86	6	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	72	12	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	67	12	28	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	86	6	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	74	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	65	15	35	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	72	12	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	72	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	84	7	16	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Selworthy School, Taunton TA2 8HD

Recently, I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit very much and thought it was a very happy school. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at school.

Here are the main points:

- Your school is good and gives you lots of exciting things to do in school and in the local area.
- The school helps you to make good progress with your learning, to play a big part in school life and to do more things on your own.
- You really enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is excellent.
- Adults run the school well and make sure you receive the right level of care and support to make you feel very safe and happy.
- Adults are very good at using signing, pictures and symbols to help you give your views. ♦
- The school works very closely with your parents who are extremely pleased with how the school helps you learn.

I have asked the school to do a few things to help it get even better:

- Teachers should check that the work you are given in lessons is always at the right level to help some of you learn more quickly.
- Those of you who are older students should study more reading and writing and have more time using computers to help with your learning.

You can help by always trying your hardest.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.