

Exeter House Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126551
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	360105
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katerinie Gallagher
Headteacher	Richard Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
School address	Somerset Road Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3BL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 11 lessons, taught by 11 different teachers. They looked at the school's documentation including curriculum planning, pupils' files, the school development plan and school policies. Meetings were held with school staff and two governors. Inspectors scrutinised the 40 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the validity of the data the school collects on pupils' achievements and how it is analysed to demonstrate pupils' progress
- how effectively teaching and learning and the curriculum support the learning of the different groups in the school
- the quality of leadership and management of the middle leaders in the school
- the effectiveness of development planning and how it is linked to a clear vision for the school's work.

Information about the school

Exeter House School caters for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. Many also have autistic spectrum disorder and a few have sensory or physical disabilities. Currently there are only two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher took up his post in September 2009. Work is due to begin very shortly on an extension to the building which will double the size of the school's accommodation.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Exeter House School provides an inadequate education for its pupils, who do not achieve well enough as a result. A significant reason for the school's ineffectiveness is the inadequate quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' planning is inconsistent and in many cases fails to recognise the different abilities of pupils within each class. This means that pupils are often asked to undertake the same tasks, and these are insufficiently linked to what pupils have achieved previously. Nevertheless, there are pockets of good practice in the school. For example, careful individual planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage leads to children making good progress. Planning for sixth form students is also more effective and leads to satisfactory achievement.

The present curriculum arrangements do not give sufficient attention to providing the individual structured learning programmes required to meet the different special educational needs of pupils. Insufficient time is given to pupils' learning. Breaks can be for as long as 45 minutes each morning and, for some classes, the lunch interval stretches to one hour and 45 minutes. While there is some structure to these periods of time and many pupils have eating programmes, they are insufficiently focused on pupils' learning. The school's timetables show there is inconsistency in the learning opportunities for each group, with some spending too much time on out of school experiences such as horse riding and trips into the community. While these make a contribution to aspects of pupils' personal development, they are not linked closely enough to improving their academic achievement.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and, at break and lunchtimes, show this by playing happily together. They also make a good contribution to the school community, having their opinions put forward in the very active school council and performing many tasks around school, such as returning registers to the office and looking after the school animals. Many of them adopt healthy lifestyles, eating well and enjoying physical activities. The school provides strong pastoral care for pupils, although the support for their learning is, on some occasions, ineffective.

The headteacher has had a positive impact on the school and has initiated a development plan designed to address its weaknesses, notably in the management structure. The lack of senior staff with clear roles and responsibilities has resulted in the ineffective monitoring of provision and the inadequate achievement of pupils. This indicates that, despite the validity of the headteacher's evaluation of the school's present provision and

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his intentions to improve its effectiveness, plans are not yet having sufficient impact as their implementation is too recent. The capacity for sustained improvement is currently inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of lesson planning by:
 - ensuring that it is consistently focused on what pupils will learn
 - ensuring that the knowledge staff have of pupils' achievements is accurate
◆◆ and used to plan their work with an emphasis on them making good progress.
- Extend the curriculum by increasing teaching and learning opportunities through shortening break and lunchtimes and ensuring that additional activities are focused on increasing pupils' achievement.
- Develop the roles of all senior staff to bring about effective support for the school's improvement and improving pupils' achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Given pupils' learning difficulties, it would be inappropriate to judge their attainment against that of all pupils nationally. Pupils' achievement is inadequate, however, because they make insufficient progress in their learning. School data suggest that a large majority of pupils make or exceed expected levels of progress. These data, however, are inaccurate and are far too optimistic because they are not based on secure information about pupils' starting points.

In the lessons observed, too many pupils made inadequate progress. Too often they were all involved in the same activities irrespective of their starting points. For example, all pupils in one class were working on money recognition. All enjoyed completing the same tasks and the teacher made it interesting by encouraging them to use real money to buy items from a shop. However, there was an insufficient focus on the different level of ability. A number of pupils could already recognise the coins and made no progress. Similarly, a younger primary group timetabled for music were engaged in learning some new words but the lack of planning for the activity meant it lacked a clear focus.

Examples of good progress were seen in some lessons. For example, the class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with some Key Stage 1 pupils made good progress in a physical education lesson. They clearly increased their ball skills as the lesson progressed because the planning was effective in addressing the individual ability level of each child.

◆ The more positive outcomes in relation to pupils' personal development include at least satisfactory progress in developing skills to support their future economic well-being. Mini-enterprise projects help them understand the concept of earning money and there is a good range of internal and external work experience opportunities enjoyed by pupils. Attendance is above average, even though a few miss school through lengthy periods in hospital. Pupils talk about the benefits of eating healthily and records show most take up

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the opportunities to engage in physical activities. Behaviour is usually at least satisfactory but on occasions is not managed effectively.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

There are examples of good teaching in the school. However, in five of the 11 lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was inadequate. For example, in a geography lesson pupils were asked to go around the school and grounds to collect items of interest. This was an exercise they had done previously and no reason was given for them being asked to complete it again. The task did not challenge the more-able pupils and was not linked to any expected outcome for those pupils with more significant learning difficulties. In this group, a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) was left unattended and inadequately stimulated for a considerable period while her peers undertook this task. Other examples of PMLD pupils not being sufficiently included with their peers were seen during the inspection. In too many sessions, pupils of different abilities were completing the same tasks without it being sufficiently clear what it was teachers expected them to learn. For example, a predominantly Year 8 group were asked to follow a recipe to make cookies and then decorate these. They enjoyed the

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activity but there was no link to what they were learning and at the end staff did not take the opportunity to explore with them what they might have learnt.

Teaching assistants are eager and keen to support pupils, dealing with their personal hygiene needs very effectively. They are not, however, sufficiently involved in supporting their learning and during the inspection were on occasions seen sitting with the pupils simply listening to the teacher. Although there has been a strong emphasis on improving pupils' communication skills through the increased use of signing, very few examples of staff signing were observed. Good use, however, is made of symbols ♦ to communicate to pupils. ♦

Much has been done to improve the curriculum, with a focus on pupils developing personal and social skills, especially within the plans for pupils in Key Stage 3. However, there is an insufficient link between what is happening in lessons and this planning. This, together with the limited direct teaching time, means that throughout the school, the curriculum is not promoting pupils' learning effectively. Too often, the activities of each day are focused on providing pupils with activities to take part in rather than opportunities for them to make progress in their learning.

The very positive relationships between staff and pupils help create a caring atmosphere in the school. This is fully recognised by almost all parents and carers, who know their children are safe in school. There are, however, some concerns amongst a significant number of staff about the management of pupils' behaviour. While behaviour observed was at least satisfactory, the management of behaviour is inconsistent, particularly in relation to rewards and sanctions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's evaluation of the school's effectiveness has enabled him to recognise that there are a number of key areas in need of improvement. He has established a clear vision for the school, increasingly shared by all. Together with the planned extension to the building, this gives the school a base upon which to improve its effectiveness. However, the contribution of leaders at all levels in driving improvement is ineffective and limits the progress the school has been able to make. Systems to challenge staff and to improve the quality of provision and accelerate progress are inadequate.

The school engages well with parents and carers. Recent developments have included extending the role and hours of the parent support officer. This has helped strengthen links with parents and carers, and more than 30 families are working with the officer,

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many attending weekly support sessions in school. A very large majority of parents say that the school's leaders help them to support their child's learning. Partnerships are being developed with other agencies and recently a start has been made in supporting mainstream schools, with a teacher spending time advising a secondary school on the provision for a student with autistic spectrum disorder. They have not, however, had an impact on raising pupils' achievement. Community cohesion has been carefully considered and the involvement of the school in an international project with other schools has helped promote this. The implementation of a plan to develop this further, however, is still at an early stage of development.

Governors are enthusiastic supporters of the school but acknowledge that until recently they have not been sufficiently involved. They are now more active and, through setting up committees, have begun to be involved in holding the school to account for the academic achievement of pupils. They also monitor the arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, ensuring that all requirements are met.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

From very low starting points, the very few children in this group make good progress. This is particularly the case in their personal and social development and in extending their communication skills. Good relationships with staff help them to develop their independence in a safe and secure environment. The staff make best use of what is very limited accommodation. The children participate in a wide range of activities, with their achievements being carefully assessed and recorded. The staff team work closely together to ensure that children make good progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

The majority of students make satisfactory progress, and are well prepared for leaving school. They usually respond well to the range of learning opportunities provided. As a result, most make at least satisfactory progress in developing their personal skills. Examples of good teaching were seen during the inspection but records show this is not always the case, and that the staff team is not always consistently effective in addressing students' differing needs.

In the two lessons observed, good attention was given to each individual student and a good range of learning experiences provided. Planning was effective and students were fully involved in the activities. A good emphasis is placed on encouraging them to be aware of the world around them and each morning a brief review of the daily newspapers contributes well to this. The management of this provision is improving and ensuring that students make at least satisfactory progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the work of the school. Comments such as, 'I am so pleased that my child attends Exeter House, we all love it' and 'everyone is so happy and helpful' are typical of many received. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns. One of these centred around whether the school provided equal opportunities for pupils in wheelchairs. During inspection, inspectors found no evidence of concerns in relation to this aspect. One parent did express concern that the education provision detailed in their child's statement of special educational needs was not being delivered. The inspectors found that there was some validity in this concern and this is reflected in the judgements made on teaching and the curriculum within this report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Exeter House 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 97 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	75	9	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	66	13	33	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	55	14	35	4	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	63	13	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	50	16	41	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	63	13	33	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)	19	48	17	43	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	65	10	25	1	3	2	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	50	16	41	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	55	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	57	15	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	10	10	0	2	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.



8 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Exeter House School, Salisbury SP1 3BL

We enjoyed coming into school recently and meeting so many of you. For those of you who find reading more difficult I hope the staff and your parents will help you to read this letter.

We found you all very helpful and polite. The report on your school highlights some good aspects. These include the way you learn to be safe and make healthy choices. In particular, it praises your contribution to the school community. We also recognise that your new headteacher has done a lot to try to improve the school and that there are other staff who demonstrate good practice. We do, though, consider that the overall quality of education being provided for you is not of a suitable standard.

Because of this, we have placed the school in something called 'special measures'. This means that we believe things need to be improved rapidly and inspectors will come back next term to see what progress has been made in improving the school. In particular, we have asked the school's leaders to:

- improve teaching by:
- ensuring the activities you do and the work you are given are planned to help you learn and make good progress
- making sure what you are asked to do is linked to your differing ability levels
- extend the time spent each day on teaching and learning
- involve more staff in the leadership and management of the school.

Once again, thank you for being so welcoming when we visited.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett

Lead inspector

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