

Exeter House Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126551
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	366521
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katerinie Gallagher
Headteacher	Richard Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2010
School address	Somerset Road Salisbury Wiltshire SP1 3BL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majestys inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed jointly with members of the leadership team, in eight lessons with seven teachers seen. The inspector also attended the production of *The Valkyries* (a collaboration between the school, Woodford Valley school and La Folia). Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, and staff. The inspector observed the schools work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, assessment information, policies and pupils work. Parental and pupil questionnaires were not distributed as part of this inspection.

The inspector reviewed the schools progress since the last inspection and the previous monitoring visit and looked in detail at the following.

The impact of the assistant headteachers and middle leaders.

The preparation of pupils for life after school.

Pupils progress and achievement in literacy and numeracy over the last year.

The use of all resources to provide value for money.

Respite for staff and pupils at lunchtimes.

The schools capacity to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average-size special school. It caters for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. A significant number have autism spectrum disorders. All have statements of special educational needs, with an increasing proportion having sensory and physical disabilities along with more complex learning needs. Around a quarter of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. More pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual points of transfer than in most schools. The school achieved Sportsmark, Activemark and Healthy School Status.

When the school was inspected in October 2010, it was deemed to require special measures. Her Majestys Inspector made a monitoring visit in February 2011 to evaluate the schools progress. There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection with key senior and middle leadership appointments made in the current school year, 2010/11. Three assistant headteachers were appointed in November 2010, with responsibility for leading the primary, secondary and autistic spectrum disorders teams. Middle leadership responsibilities were agreed with staff in February 2011 for other areas of the schools work. An acting deputy headteacher has been working with the school on a temporary basis for three days a week.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Exeter House is a satisfactory school which is on a clear and upward trend of improvement. Following an extensive review of all its work, the school has increased its capacity to sustain improvement by quickly implementing fundamental changes. A radical overhaul of the school's senior leadership, a thorough revision of staff responsibilities and a number of new, reviewed and rewritten policies, supported by a comprehensive training programme, have turned the school round. Since the appointment of the assistant headteachers, it has improved rapidly. Senior leaders, and the governing body, have a clear vision for improvement and have not flinched from focusing on introducing changes and directing staff. Accountability is much improved and flows from subject and area leaders through to all tiers of staff within the school. Clear systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of provision have been developed. Although many are newly in place, there is now a consistent and reliable approach to appraising pupils' progress and taking action to address weaknesses. The senior leaders are accurate in their assessment of teaching and learning but recognise that middle leaders, and some teachers, are still developing their leadership and management skills. They know there is still more to do to embed the changes, particularly those relating to curriculum innovation and communication.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 make consistently good progress and achieve well. This is because staff continue to provide purposeful learning opportunities, accurately monitor the impact of the good teaching on learning and frequently make adjustments during lessons and activities to drive improvement.

Overall, teaching and achievement are satisfactory, including in the sixth form. Lessons now proceed in well-planned stages and pupils' behaviour is consistently managed effectively. Improvements in teaching through the use of assessment, and the accurate tracking of pupils' learning, have resulted in pupils, overall, making satisfactory progress. However, some pupils' targets are not sufficiently specific or timely. Also, in lessons not all staff use a sufficiently wide range of teaching approaches, including the use of communication aids, or imaginative resources, to fully motivate and challenge every pupil in lessons. This results in a slower pace of learning.

The school's collaborative production of Wagner's Ring Cycle is one example of the ways that the curriculum helps to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Here all the words and virtually all the music evolved from the imaginations of the pupils through workshops with professional musicians, singers, actors and dancers. This production involved the whole school, increasing confidence and

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creativity for the vast majority of pupils. Nevertheless, other aspects of the curriculum have not been effective at preparing pupils for life beyond school. Successful adjustments have already been made by increasing the time that pupils are in lessons and by improving the literacy and numeracy provision. The weekly day at college for those in the sixth form was a great success and further improvements are in place for the start of September for the oldest pupils.

Pupils behaviour is good; pupils feel safe and many adopt healthy lifestyles. This reflects the school's good care, guidance and support for their welfare and well-being. The school has introduced more midday supervisors, who now provide pupils and teaching staff respite at lunchtimes. The schools inclusive approach is a notable strength. The school is an environment where everyone is treated with trust and dignity. The involvement of parents and carers with their child's learning and development, for example through the improved quality of annual reviews, is now good.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate that all pupils make good or outstanding progress by ensuring that:
 - rigorous assessment data is used to develop precise and challenging learning and developmental targets for each pupil, taking into account their individual special educational needs
 - combined assessment data are used to improve the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of pupils and equips them for life beyond school, whilst providing good or better value for money
 - all lesson planning and evaluation has pupils progress, related to their individual targets, as the core focus
 - in lessons, staff consistently use augmentative and alternative communication aids to develop further pupils understanding and communication skills
 - in lessons, resources are used based on the best practice
 - all staff capitalise on opportunities to assess pupils as they learn, helping them to make the best possible achievement in all activities and over time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils learning in lessons during the inspection was generally good. The youngest pupils make the best progress. Progress in all year groups and classes was accelerated when all staff used a variety of communication techniques, including signs and symbols and sensory activities as well as utilising the available electronic devices. Higher attaining pupils also made more progress when the activities were related to real-life or stimulating situations such as evaluating The Valkyries performance, using real money when learning how to count and investigating pirates as part of creative writing.

Pupils are good ambassadors for their school and where possible play an active part in the life of the school and the wider community. Many learn to be independent and take

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specific responsibilities, for example taking the register to the school office or being on the school council. Council members ensure that the views of pupils in each class are listened to and are used to influence decisions. This provides a good understanding of democratic procedures, managing a budget and the ways and uses of data collection, recording, interpretation and presentation. Councillors are rightly proud of their successes, for example in helping to design aspects of the new school building and the purchasing of bicycles for the playground.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by the above average attendance, because they feel valued and safe. Self-esteem is effectively promoted in assemblies because they provide good opportunities for pupils' successes and achievements to be recognised. This also happens in lessons, for example in a literacy lesson where all the pupils and staff cheered when a pupil, after considerable effort, managed to join in with the group work by pressing her switch.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2

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?

Teaching and learning in the lessons seen during the inspection were generally good.

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Nevertheless, monitoring evidence by the school and local authority demonstrates that the proportion of good teaching is not yet consistent. This is supported by the data that clearly show where some pupils have not made sufficient progress. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, planning and the use of resources are not based on best practice, and time is not always used well. Also, some teachers do not always make the most of opportunities to assess pupils progress as pupils learn, involve other adults in the class to help with assessment or make adaptations swiftly enough to improve learning when progress begins to slow in the lesson.

The curriculum now provides a stronger focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Mini-enterprise projects, for example producing artefacts for Saint Valentines day, help older pupils to have a valuable and real understanding of money and quality assurance. The school is aware that these activities, and the involvement of younger pupils with the animals that the school has on site, are areas that have been under exploited. The school has rightly made significant changes to the curriculum plans ready for implementation in September 2011.

Effective programmes to support pupils' personal development are successful in boosting pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pastoral care is particularly strong and the school works sensitively to support pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, and also to support their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has secured a cohesive senior leadership team that is highly committed to school improvement. Expectations of pupils learning have been made clear to all staff and there is a clear understanding of the strategic direction of the school in relation to accelerating pupils progress over time.

Support from the local authority through advisers on literacy and numeracy, and in particular the work of the acting deputy headteacher on assessment, has been instrumental in positioning the school to move forward. Middle managers have a clear understanding of their roles, but recognise that their leadership and management skills are not yet fully developed. The roles, skills and training needs of teaching assistants have been evaluated with training and professional development already implemented so that they can support pupils learning more effectively.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are fully met. It has increased its capacity to challenge the school and scrutinise its work in relation to learning

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outcomes. The school is diligent about tackling discriminatory practices and ensures that all pupils can access the provision. The school is highly inclusive and the extent to which it promotes equality of opportunity is satisfactory and improving, linked to the achievement of pupils. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has undertaken an audit of its work and can clearly identify its current impact with effective plans to develop aspects further. Checks have been made on all adults who work within the school and a single central record is maintained and updated when needed. Resources are used effectively to achieve satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and clarity of direction ensure that children achieve well from their exceptionally low starting points. Several of the children demonstrate an understanding of daily routines. For example, when they arrive in school they put their coats on their pegs, their switches and books in the basket and pictures of their faces on the wall to indicate they are in school. Due to their special educational needs, many need to have prompts or assistance to do these tasks. However, adults promote independence as far as possible and do not jump in to help. More ambulant pupils are encouraged to help their peers with these sorts of activities, helping to promote resilience and personal development. Switches and the interactive whiteboard are used well so that all pupils can have a voice and take part in group activities. Staff use assessment information and procedures effectively to monitor children's 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

On joining the sixth form students continue to make satisfactory progress and enjoy their learning. Staff are supportive and are making effective improvements to enhance the provision and life chances for students. For example, since the last inspection, changes have been made to the curriculum that have a much greater potential for preparing students for life beyond school. Ten students have attended a whole day per week at Wiltshire College as part of a link course to give them an understanding of college life and to increase their independence. As a result of this and other taster sessions, a handful of students have successfully applied to attend a newly designed course at the college for five days per week from September 2011. Other curriculum changes are also planned to ensure those aged 14 to 19 can gain qualifications through Foundation Level learning programmes.

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

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspection conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



7 July 2010

Dear pupils

Inspection of Exeter House Special School, Salisbury SP1 3BL

As some of you will remember I have visited your school a couple of times to see how well you were getting on with your learning and to see how well adults help you. I think that your school has improved dramatically over the last year. It provides you with a satisfactory education and has many good parts.

This is what I think your school does best.

Adults have a better understanding about what each of you needs to learn because they share information better.

The staff at the school work hard with other adults to help make sure you get the support and guidance you need.

The youngest children learn to do things for themselves.

You have such wonderful adults who are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be. I have asked them to make sure that your learning continues to improve. You can help by remembering your targets and letting adults know when your work is too easy or too hard.

I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector

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