

Gibside School

Burnthouse Lane, Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE16 5AT

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The exceptional leadership skills of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have moved the school forward significantly since the last inspection.
- The highly motivated and skilled governing body offer school leaders an outstanding level of support and challenge. As a result, the school has an excellent capacity for continuous improvement.
- Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. They quickly settle into the routines of the school and begin to develop the skills required for learning. As a result, they achieve exceptionally well from very low starting points.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers are exceptionally skilled at meeting the needs of all pupils. In lessons, learning is made fun and exciting. This engages pupils from the outset and ensures that they make maximum progress.
- Despite pupils' very high level of need, the behaviour they display both inside and outside the classroom is excellent. This is because pupils very much enjoy coming to school to learn and staff are exceptionally skilled at applying the positive behaviour policy.
- The safety and care of all pupils is at the centre of the school's ethos. Through exceptional partnerships with healthcare staff, pupils' care needs are delivered alongside the curriculum ensuring learning time is maximised.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 17 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers. A joint lesson observation was undertaken with the headteacher. The inspection team also listened to three pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 read.
- The inspection team had discussions with teachers, members of the governing body, pupils, senior leaders and a member of the physiotherapy team. A telephone conversation was also undertaken with a representative of the local educational authority.
- Eleven parents made their views known to the inspection team through the online questionnaire (Parent View). Twelve further parents attending their children's parents' evening spoke to inspectors.
- The inspection team looked at the work of the school, as well as scrutinising health and safety documentation, pupils' work, teachers' curriculum planning and the school's system for tracking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Pringle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school meets the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It also meets the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and children with severe learning difficulties as well as those with other complex communication and medical needs.
- Approximately half the pupils on roll are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is a significantly larger proportion than the national average.
- Since the last inspection, the school has further developed its Early Years Foundation Stage provision and currently five nursery-age children attend.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin and almost twice as many boys attend as girls.
- An after-school club, which is not run by the school's governing body, uses the school premises to care for pupils at the end of the school day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the tracking of pupils' learning is consistently recorded so that the rate of progress against targets set is more easily measured across the whole school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All pupils who attend the school have a statement of special educational needs to meet their profound and multiple learning difficulties. As a result of the highly skilled approach of staff to meeting pupils' needs, all groups, including those with ASD, those of White British origin and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium make outstanding progress.
- Many pupils arrive at school in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception class. The overwhelming majority have knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. A significant number, particularly those with ASD, also lack the behavioural skills needed for learning.
- Staff are exceptionally skilled at reducing barriers to learning and, as a result, pupils make excellent progress both socially, emotionally and academically.
- Parents agree that their children make exceptional progress and were keen to share their views with the inspection team. The view of one summed up the feelings of many: 'The school has helped my child enjoy coming to school to learn for the first time. His behaviour at home has also improved immensely. I cannot thank staff enough.'
- The vast majority of pupils achieve exceptionally well across the curriculum. A clear focus on developing basic numeracy and literacy skills ensures that pupils make outstanding progress despite their very low starting points. School staff are relentless in the view that wherever possible pupils need to become proficient readers in order to succeed in the classroom. Carefully tailored literacy sessions in Key Stage 2 not only improve pupils' reading skills, but also help develop their understanding and comprehension skills, ensuring pupils make exceptional progress in improving their reading.
- Pupils achieve equally well in mathematics because staff are outstanding at matching activities to meet their needs. An example of this was seen in a lesson in which pupils with a high level of need were accessing number bonds using a variety of different approaches, including information and communication technology and one to one counting, with carefully chosen familiar objects. At the end of the lesson, pupils' learning was very carefully assessed against their targets and all showed a clear 'thumbs up' for understanding.
- Whilst few pupils, due to their exceptionally high level of need, are able to reach levels of skills and knowledge comparable to age-related expectations, staff take a highly inclusive approach and pupils frequently join mainstream classes in neighbouring primary schools. This successfully promotes their achievement both academically and socially.
- Pupils are set challenging targets across the curriculum, and their achievement is tracked and monitored exceptionally well in the classroom. However, whilst the monitoring of pupils' progress across the school is undertaken regularly the system used is not yet sufficiently embedded and lacks detail for the monitoring of a small number of groups.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching across the school is outstanding because teachers and support staff are exceptionally good at meeting the diverse needs of all pupils.
- Staff work together in very close-knit teams and plan highly effectively for pupils' learning. As a result each pupil's academic and social needs are met outstandingly well. For example, although targets for learning are keenly focussed on moving pupils forward to maximise their achievement, they also take into consideration pupils' social and behavioural needs.
- Pupils and parents agree that teachers make learning fun. As a result pupils enjoy coming to school and engage willingly with new challenges, whatever their level of need. An example of pupils' high levels of engagement could be seen in a remarkably good literacy lesson with pupils identified as having ASD. The teacher had high expectations of pupils from the outset and carefully explained his expectations and pupils' learning objectives. His excellent use of the

interactive whiteboard as well as scenarios, actions and sounds which pupils could understand and relate to, ensured all were confident, by the end of the lesson, on the different phonetic sounds of the letter 'c'.

- Lessons are characterised by a fast pace and clear focus. Staff have excellent communication skills and, as a result, learning objectives are clearly communicated to pupils from the outset. Signing is used throughout the school and is practised by all members of staff. Symbols are also particularly effective to help develop independent choice for all pupils. This ensures that school is a language-rich environment which is accessible to all pupils however complex their level of need.
- Staff work very closely with the children's therapy team based in school. As a result pupils' physiotherapy and speech and language needs are often incorporated into lessons, maximising learning time and supporting pupils as holistically as possible.
- The curriculum has a positive effect on teaching because it is imaginatively planned and links very closely to the needs of pupils.
- Because staff plan so closely together the role of support staff in lessons is very clear and results in pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, being exceptionally well supported to make equal progress.
- Teachers use praise outstandingly well and, coupled with the reward system, are highly effective at encouraging reluctant learners. Feedback given to pupils shows them clear pathways on how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is excellent both in and outside lessons, despite the high level of social, emotional and behavioural needs of a significant number. Behaviour at the end of dinnertime is particularly noteworthy because, despite pupils' obvious enjoyment and absorption in the different activities offered, as soon as music is played signalling the session end, all line up quietly without further prompting.
- Pupils show a high level of respect and caring attitudes towards each other and staff. They are thoughtful and calm as they move around the building, holding doors open for staff and visitors without prompting.
- Parents and pupils feel that school keeps them very safe. Road safety sessions delivered at school help them to develop an excellent understanding of personal safety. Pupils spoken to during the inspection expressed the view that incidents of bullying of any type were rare and dealt with effectively by staff.
- The vast majority of pupils say they, 'love coming to school'. Staff relentlessly and successfully focus on supporting pupils' personal and social development, which increases pupils' self-esteem and belief in their own abilities and, as one pupil expressed it, 'Makes me think I can do, not can't do.' This has led to a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The improvement in pupils' attitudes is appreciated by parents, several of whom commented that their children now, 'really enjoy coming to school' and, as a result, have increased their attendance significantly.
- School leaders' philosophy on emphasising positive behaviour is clearly reflected in the implementation of the behaviour policy. All staff use the same consistent approach and, as a result, pupils respond very well to high expectations of their behaviour. This is reflected in the school's excellent record of not excluding any pupil in the last three years.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The exceptional and visionary leadership of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has moved the school on significantly since the last inspection. Self-evaluation processes are clear, concise and insightful, demonstrating leaders' excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school.
 - The performance of all staff is a key driver to continuous improvement. Performance management targets are taken directly from the school's development plan. Since the last inspection, school leaders have re-organised all staff into cross-phase teams which contribute to and monitor different areas of the school's performance. This highly innovative and devolved approach is continuing to drive the school forward.
 - The continuous and relentless focus by the leadership team on improving the quality of teaching has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of lessons and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
 - Staff and pupils alike feel valued as part of a highly inclusive community. Systems which promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination are securely in place. As a result, progress for all groups of pupils is excellent.
 - School leaders' clear and unequivocal belief that every child should make as much academic progress as possible is reflected in the diverse and bespoke approach taken to planning the curriculum, which is very well matched to the needs of all pupils.
 - The clear picture of sustained and exceptional improvement within the school is recognised by the local authority which provides light touch support.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body offers an excellent and high level of support and challenge to school leaders and has increased its capacity to continue to do so by its recruitment of very well qualified members
 - an example of the outstanding quality of work undertaken by the governing body could clearly be seen in an audit of the impact on pupils' learning of recent disruptions caused by inclement weather. As a result of the audit, staff have now agreed a plan to make up any future lost learning time.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131213
Local authority	Tyne and Wear
Inspection number	402451

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Chapman
Headteacher	Jane Higgin
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
Telephone number	0191 4410123
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