

# Elmfield School for Deaf Children

Greystoke Avenue, Westbury-on Trim, Bristol BS10 6AY,

**Inspection dates** 17–18 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils of all abilities, including those with additional special educational needs, achieve well in all areas of learning.
- They make the best progress in reading and mathematics because of exciting and creative practical tasks and high-quality resources.
- Younger pupils make outstanding progress in visual phonics sessions (matching signs with letters and sounds).
- Older pupils whose only disability is their deafness achieve very well in their GCSEs. All pupils achieve well in their accredited courses.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers generally challenge pupils well with detailed questioning, demanding independent and sustained responses.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance has improved and pupils say they feel safe and secure.
- The effective curriculum provides memorable experiences engaging pupils well in learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high standard due to the exciting visits and residential experiences that take place outside normal lessons.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and the governing body have built on the good quality of teaching through rigorous monitoring and high-quality training.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics because the new visual phonics programme is not embedded across the school.
- Not all pupils have sufficient opportunities to be independent in lessons because sometimes too much is done for them.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders, the school council, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of evidence including pupils' books, teachers' planning, the school's improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in six lessons jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also listened to pupils read.
- The inspector took account of eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and received questionnaires from 28 staff from across the two sites.

## Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average special school which caters for children who are severely or profoundly deaf from nine different local authorities. Pupils are bilingual and many use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language..
- The school is situated on two sites. The primary department is in the north of Bristol, while the secondary site is co-located with Fairfield High School, a mainstream secondary school east of the city enabling Elmfield pupils to have access to the full range of GCSE's alongside mainstream pupils. There is also an inclusion centre for mainstream pupils with hearing impairment that is staffed by Elmfield school. This provides inclusion for deaf or hearing impaired pupils who attend the mainstream school.
- The school provides outreach support to other local schools.
- A high proportion of pupils have additional special educational needs in addition to their deafness, including visual impairment, autism or behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Currently, there are four children in the Early Years Foundation Stage class.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.

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

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by securely embedding the new visual phonics (letters and sounds) programme across the school.
- Strengthen pupils' independence by ensuring that they do as much as possible for themselves in each lesson and have increased opportunities to take on responsibilities.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils across the school achieve well. They make at least the progress expected of them in writing and better than expected progress in reading and mathematics. Pupils develop lip reading and oracy skills well through effective speech and language therapy programmes. Most parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire rightly agree that their children achieve well.
- Pupils whose only difficulty is their deafness attain standards similar to those found nationally.
- Older pupils achieve very well in their accredited courses, benefiting from the co-location which enables many of them to share their learning with their mainstream peers. Pupils achieve at least a level 2 in BSL by the time they leave the school in Year 11. This is equivalent to a grade B in GCSE. The most recent group of four Year 11 leavers attained over 40 GCSE or equivalent qualifications with a quarter of these being at grades A or A\* in line with the national average. Many pupils move on successfully to college.
- Pupils make good use of information and communication technology. For example, in Years 3 and 4, pupils were engaged in finding information about a news item in which horse meat had been found in burgers sold at some supermarkets. Pupils had strong views on the subject and searched the internet for information. Their presentations on the subject to their peers were recorded on their own personal hand-held computers. This enabled them to share their recordings with their parents and carers, and to build effectively on their communication skills.
- A strong focus on the teaching of visual phonics (matching letters and sounds) to pupils in Years 3 and 4 ensures that they make rapid and sustained progress in reading and writing. Although all primary classes are taught visual phonics, progress is less evident in the older group as it was not taught in their younger years.
- Pupils' good achievements in reading were clearly illustrated by the way a pupil in Year 6 successfully read to the inspector using signed supported English very fluently. His good understanding of the story and open opinions enabled him to talk about the different features.
- Practical approaches to mathematics enable pupils of all ages and abilities to achieve well in the subject. For example, a group of pupils with additional special educational needs achieved well as they matched colours and shapes and were able to name many of these accurately.
- The progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those entitled to free school meals, is as good as other pupils. These students benefit from good additional support, including extra help and guidance from teaching assistants, to ensure that they are able to keep up with their peers.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is at least good and sometimes is outstanding. Pupils make better than expected progress because of the effective action the school has taken to improve teaching in the past three years. Rigorous monitoring by senior managers and the local authority, and close links with local partner schools, have enabled teachers to improve their own practice. The pace of learning in lessons is good and, where teaching is outstanding, pupils work at a very fast pace.
- Planning in mathematics ensures that tasks are practical so that pupils can engage with resources and find answers to questions. Particularly good planning in all subjects in the secondary department emphasises the importance that teachers place on challenging pupils to take part actively in lessons.
- Marking of pupils' work is good and their books are very well presented. Expectations are high and teachers regularly challenge pupils to achieve more. Teachers are skilled in the use of signing and use their skills to encourage pupils to engage in discussions with them and to talk to

each other. Lessons are exciting and very effective use is made of resources to excite and engage pupils.

- Good questioning helps to extend pupils' communication skills and encourages them to find answers, and so deepens their knowledge. Just occasionally, particularly in the younger classes, pupils are not encouraged to do things for themselves. At these times, too much is done for them by adults and they do not use their own initiative or independence to find resources or make choices.
- Teachers make effective use of the rich and creative curriculum to plan their lessons and build successfully on pupils' previous learning. They link tasks closely to the individualised needs and abilities of their pupils. For example, pupils with additional special educational needs regularly benefit from additional support and specifically tailored tasks to ensure that they are successful.
- Teachers make the best use of different communication aids to foster each individual pupil's skills. For example, if a pupil could benefit from an oral approach, teachers make sure that this is fully available.

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

- Leaders have successfully raised expectations and improved attendance over the past three years. Pupils now attend regularly. Parents and carers agree that their children are happy at school. The level of exclusions has reduced significantly since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school, including in lessons, at break-times and lunchtimes, is good. The majority listen well to their teachers and get on well with their peers. Relationships are very positive and pupils enjoy working together. Pupils say that the behaviour system 'works'. They know that any poor behaviour may have an impact on trips out for others and so they 'try hard to behave well'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know about unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. One girl reported that pupils really liked the new fire alarm because it was very loud. 'This means that those who can hear a little bit can hear the alarm and tell the others. That makes me feel really safe.'
- The school council say they understand that there are several kinds of bullying but report that there is absolutely no bullying of any kind at the school. They say there is sometimes some teasing but that teachers and other staff quickly sort it out. They say that everyone is friendly.
- Older pupils develop independence through regular inclusion with mainstream peers and through a wide range of visits to places of interest. Recent links with the 'Bristol Ensemble' has resulted in a pupils planning a concert celebrating the music of Beethoven. In discussion with the inspector, the school council talked excitedly about their camping trip to the Forest of Dean where they tried kayaking and riding on a zip-wire.
- Pupils participate in many fundraising activities and talk with enthusiasm about how they have raised money through cake sales to fund water for Africa. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is effectively fostered through visits and visitors. Older pupils are proud of their deaf culture.
- Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors and get on well together regardless of age, race or ability. They respond well to the school's consistent approach to managing behaviour and, as a result, the school is a calm and welcoming place.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff, with effective support from the local authority, have built on existing good practice and further improved the quality of teaching and learning over the past three years. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school, although a few are concerned about the ongoing temporary nature of leadership. Plans are now

rightly in place to appoint a substantive headteacher in the near future.

- The work of leaders at all levels demonstrates the school has a strong capacity to improve. They are fully involved in improving teaching and learning and make effective use of the National Teachers' Standards to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching. Senior leaders work closely with the governing body and the local authority, as well as with local school partners, to strengthen practice further.
- Leaders have ensured good practice by developing an exciting curriculum that meets the needs of pupils well and ensures that they are not discriminated against. It provides some very memorable experiences for pupils who talked enthusiastically about their trips. Photographic evidence around the school shows pupils engaging with enthusiasm in building rafts and shelters, climbing walls and trekking across fields, extending their horizons and improving their personal development.
- Links and outreach work with local schools enable inclusion for all groups of pupils and a sharing of expertise. In the secondary department, for example, pupils regularly undertake lessons with their mainstream peers and these are monitored thoroughly in partnership by leaders to ensure success.
- The senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning, and carefully track each individual pupil's achievements to ensure at least good progress. School data on pupils' progress and on the quality of teaching are accurate and show that staff are clear about what is expected.
- The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The school is closely involved with the local community and with other schools in the area.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is supportive to leaders and staff, encouraging a welcoming atmosphere in which all pupils feel valued. Members of the governing body regularly evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They know how well pupils are doing and regularly check the performance of teachers and pupils. The governing body is working closely with the local authority to appoint a substantive leadership team. It takes an active part in the school's day-to-day life. Governors manage the school finances well and show a clear understanding of the importance of linking staff pay to the quality of teaching. Sufficient funding is allocated to regular, high-quality training to ensure teaching continues to improve. Finances are well managed. Additional funding through the pupil premium is used effectively to provide extra staffing, often one-to-one, and additional experiences for eligible pupils, helping them to achieve well. The governing body makes sure that safeguarding practices and procedures fully meet current national requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109385
<b>Local authority</b>	Bristol City of
<b>Inspection number</b>	401048

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Chair</b>	Rev. Gill Behenna
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Murray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11–12 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 9030366
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