

Exeter House Special School

Somerset Road, Salisbury, Wilts, SP1 3BL

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- From their often very low starting points, pupils make consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- Children make an excellent start in the Reception class. Lessons are carefully planned and include a wide range of lively activities.
- Provision in the sixth form is often outstanding and pupils are given increasingly good opportunities to prepare for life after school.
- The headteacher, supported by the other senior leaders, sets high expectations for pupils' development and is effective in checking the quality of teaching to ensure these are achieved.
- The staff are constantly engaged in trying to improve their teaching in the light of pupils' mounting levels of need. As a result, they increasingly produce lessons where learning is individual for each pupil.
- The support from most teaching assistants is a strong feature of the school's work.
- Pupils are extremely well cared for. They feel secure. The behaviour of pupils improves from the day they start at the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding, in lessons and around the school. Pupils are enabled to become mature and sensible members of their school community.
- The range of subjects and activities offered provides a good breadth of experiences in lessons and through enrichment activities.
- Members of the governing body know the school very well and provide consistent support and challenge to drive improvement.
- The school has received very effective support from the local authority in the last two years. This support is now more appropriately of a light touch nature.
- Parents and carers greatly appreciate the good progress their children make.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to result in all pupils making rapid progress. The much improved assessment systems are not yet consistently applied across the school.
- Middle leaders are not yet being enabled to make a full and effective contribution to whole school development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 13 teachers. Some were joint observations with senior leaders.
- They met with representatives of the governing body and members of staff.
- The lead inspector held a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and held informal discussions with some parents and carers.
- They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including data on students' progress, individual education plans, evidence of self-evaluation and monitoring records, and arrangements for safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Ian McAllister

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Exeter House is an average-sized special school. The school caters for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. A significant number has autism spectrum disorders.
- All pupils enter school with a statement of special educational needs, with an increasing proportion having sensory and physical disabilities along with more complex learning needs.
- There are many more boys than girls on roll.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and almost all speak English as their first language.
- Almost half of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or whose families are in the armed forces). This is above the national average.
- More pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual points of transfer than in most schools.
- The school has recently undergone an extensive building project, completed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that all lessons are as good as the best, by ensuring all staff understand and apply the school's refined assessment procedures consistently.
- Develop the roles of middle leaders further so that they make a full contribution to whole school development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All pupils receive a very good start on entry to the school as assessments of what they know and can do are rigorous, and integration plans, with supportive care, are very well thought out. This means they settle quickly and make progress immediately.
- Observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed that, throughout the school, all groups of pupils are never taught less than well and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress towards the clear and challenging targets in their individual education plans. Pupils gain an improved level of self-esteem due to the committed relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met through one-to-one support.
- Pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills progress well in most subjects through their individual learning plans. As their confidence grows they grasp the chance to use mathematics in other subjects and do so increasingly well.
- Given their starting points, the achievement of pupils in the sixth form is outstanding. In the sixth form lessons observed, teachers' expectations of pupils were high, but realistic. Pupils got unstinting support, and achieved very well, persevered and showed their developing confidence in their abilities. The school has steadily increased the opportunities on certified courses. Wherever possible, the pupils' moves to further education or employment are very carefully planned and monitored.
- There is some variation in pupils' achievement between subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4, but these differences are being dealt with as all teachers begin to adopt the school's effective assessment strategies consistently.
- The additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted very effectively to raise achievement, for example through providing additional individual support from teaching assistants, residential visits and therapy programmes for identified pupils. As a result, this group of pupils is making at least good progress.
- Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are achieving well, and enjoy their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is never less than good, and in some year groups it is outstanding. Teachers' planning has developed well over the last two years, based on improved use of assessments of pupils' needs.
- Generally, although not always, teachers match tasks carefully to the needs of individuals, and as a result pupils make secure and sustained progress over time. Occasionally, the school's assessment systems are not applied with consistency and opportunities for progress are missed.
- These assessments, which take place across all subjects every half term, provide excellent opportunities to measure accurately pupils' progress. Pupils and teachers are becoming increasingly clear about whether or not this progress is fast enough and what to do to if it is not.
- Additional support staff are deployed very effectively and in almost all cases they make excellent contributions to supporting pupils' progress, using targeted questioning and regularly checking their understanding.
- A clear whole-school approach to making sure that all pupils participate in learning has become very effective. Teachers make use of a range of strategies to engage all pupils actively in lessons; an example of this is the increased use of the simple plastic cards for decision making that all pupils understand and the use of counters to reward all positive aspects of pupils' responses. In the best lessons, teachers skilfully adapt their input to meet developing needs and to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Generally, teachers and support staff provide tasks that are progressively more challenging and enable pupils to continue to progress through their careful monitoring of the pupils' learning each day.

- The improved whole school approach to providing what is best for each pupil is very well illustrated in the development of the 'intensive interaction' programmes that all staff now understand and use. The school is aware that there needs to be more time allowed for the well organised programme for the visually impaired to be fully effective for those pupils for whom it is appropriate.
- Teachers' knowledge of each pupil, coupled with their enthusiasm, provides a highly motivating learning environment. Teachers are dedicated to providing the best educational experience for the pupils and give very generously of their time. Pupils and their parents and carers value this highly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- All parents agree on how much the behaviour and attitudes of their children improve as soon as they join the school. Many arrive with a history of failure in their previous schools. As a result of the carefully constructed individual learning programmes and exemplary care and safety, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding throughout the school.
- Pupils enjoy positive and supportive relationships with all staff members.
- The school places a strong emphasis on the implementation of thorough and practical behaviour plans. As a result, the behaviour of pupils improves considerably, particularly the behaviour of those with autistic spectrum conditions.
- During the inspection, most pupils consistently demonstrated high standards of behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and developing social skills.
- When one or two pupils were distressed and demonstrated aggressive behaviour, their outbursts were handled with exemplary care and calm. The other pupils were able to carry on with their tasks undisturbed.
- Given the number of medical conditions some pupils have, their attendance overall is above average for similar schools.
- The range of therapy support currently in place is very well deployed, especially the use of hydrotherapy which make a significant difference to the progress and all-round development of those pupils involved.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and ambition of the school's management, under the rigorous and outstanding leadership of the headteacher, have moved the school forward very well in the two years since the last inspection.
- The move into the new school building has been achieved with the minimum of disruption to pupils, but some changes are relatively new and have yet to be fully embedded.
- Although middle leaders, with additional responsibilities, are becoming involved in checking that changes in the whole school provision are being carried out, their role and contribution are under developed.
- The school understands its own strengths well and where improvement is still required is effective in using this information to develop its well-conceived action plans. This, together with the track record of improvement since the last inspection, demonstrates its strong capacity to continue improving.
- The leaders demonstrate skilful management of the performance of teachers. Accountability systems are strong and over the last two years weaker teaching has been tackled vigorously. There is a high level of professional support for all staff which is linked closely to performance management in order to improve their practice. There is no automatic progression on the pay scale.
- The leaders undertake frequent and useful monitoring of lessons and they feed back helpfully

and accurately to staff on what has gone well and where further work is required.

- The school has upgraded its procedures for tracking and reporting on pupils' progress and there is increasingly detailed and accurate information on how well individuals and groups are learning.
 - The careful provision across the whole school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and tackles any form of discrimination well.
 - The school uses the pupil premium effectively to improve access to the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils by the provision of additional staff, and to focus on pupils' own knowledge of their progress through one-to-one discussions. Both the staff and governors know that the school successfully closes the gap for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and all pupils nationally in similar schools.
 - The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Trips into the locality, visits to other local schools and work experience visits provide numerous opportunities for pupils to pursue their developing interests.
 - The local authority has supported the school very effectively in the last two years. Their support has underpinned the many improvements now evident. Its support of this good school is now appropriately light touch.
 - The school has a very thorough approach to safeguarding and the governors have ensured that requirements in this area are fully met. Staff are watchful at all times and provide a high standard of care for the pupils.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is fully involved in all school processes, checking decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. It holds the school to account in a challenging, but supportive, manner by asking probing questions when presented with documents and reports, and regularly scrutinising the school's work by analysing the performance of pupils. Governors' visits make a valuable contribution through their focused monitoring of initiatives. The governors ensure that pupil premium funding is spent effectively on one-to-one support in lessons or on additional therapy initiatives. Their involvement in performance management underpins the school's strong capacity for further improvement. This includes ensuring that there is a clear link between how well pupils achieve and how staff are paid.
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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	126551
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	400133

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Clifford
Headteacher	Richard Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2011
Telephone number	01722 334168
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