

# Penrose School

Albert Street, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 7ET

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Outstanding planning and management by senior leaders in relation to the school's re-organisation are ensuring that students are settled and achieve well during a major rebuilding programme.
- Students make good progress because they have precise individual targets and work set in lessons is mostly well matched to their particular learning needs.
- Links with parents and carers and with a variety of agencies are exceptionally strong. As a result, the school provides very good care and support for students.
- Good support from governors and the local authority has been instrumental in ensuring that the recent federation with Elmwood School has been successful and is benefiting Penrose students.
- Leaders, including governors, have been effective in securing improvements in both teaching and students' achievement.
- Teaching is now consistently good. Teachers are skilled at using signs, symbols and technology to enable students to communicate.
- Behaviour is good and students feel very safe in school. They are keen to learn and try hard in lessons. The small number of students with very problematic behaviour makes excellent progress in conforming to classroom routines because they are very well managed.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress in developing life skills.
- Staff morale is very high. Staff and parents share the ambition of the headteacher to raise the achievement of all students.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Subject leaders do not have a good enough understanding of how to improve learning in their subject areas because they are not involved enough in monitoring teaching.
- Verbal and written feedback does not always give students clear enough guidance about what they have done well and what they need to do better.
- In some parts of a small minority of lessons the pace of learning is not fast enough and higher attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently. When this happens, students lose interest and do not learn well.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all three school sites (Penrose School, Elmwood School and Victoria Park Community Centre), where students are currently based.
- The inspectors observed seven lessons, of which six were joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team. All teachers in the school were observed at least once.
- An inspector observed the breakfast club and 'wake and shake' which starts the day in the primary department.
- Inspectors talked individually to students in the primary and secondary departments and in the sixth form.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, the headteacher, the senior leadership team and subject leaders.
- An inspector met with a group of parents from the Parents' Forum.
- A telephone discussion was conducted with the local authority's school improvement adviser.
- There were no responses available on the on-line Parent View survey. The inspectors therefore looked at the school's surveys of parents' and carers' views.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, improvement planning, students' progress files, assessment information and documents related to the performance management of staff (the setting and reviewing of targets to help staff to improve their work).
- The inspectors analysed the 13 questionnaires which were returned by staff.
- The inspectors looked at students' work and heard five students read.
- The inspectors observed behaviour at lunchtime, in lessons and around the school.

## Inspection team

Christine Emerson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Price

Additional Inspector

Anne Wright

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Penrose School is a special school for students with severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). An increasing number of students has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Some students have complex medical needs and life-threatening conditions. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. A minority of students is girls. The number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very low.
- The number of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is high.
- In April 2012, the school became part of a federation with Elmwood School. The headteacher of Penrose was appointed in June 2012 as executive headteacher to cover both schools. The federation has a single governing body.
- The school is in a state of transition, with students relocating whilst building projects improve accommodation at Penrose. Planning is in place to create primary, secondary and sixth form provision on three separate sites which will be shared with Elmwood. At the present time, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, primary aged pupils and students in the sixth form with PMLD are taught on the Penrose site. Secondary aged students are taught in temporary accommodation at Robert Blake Science College which is co-located with Elmwood, and one sixth form class is based at Victoria Park Community Centre.
- In September the sixth form will move into permanent accommodation on the site of Chilton Trinity Secondary School whilst the remaining students will all be sited at Elmwood until building work at Penrose is completed.
- The school holds the Healthy Schools Plus and the Investors in People awards.
- The school does not enter students early for any form of accreditation.

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

- Improve teaching by:
  - ensuring that all parts of lessons proceed at a good pace and challenge every student
  - ensuring that verbal feedback in lessons, and marking of students' work, tell students clearly what they have done well and what they can do better.
- Develop subject leadership by:
  - training all subject leaders in carrying out lesson observations by December 2013
  - establishing a programme of lesson observations involving all subject leaders by July 2014.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with very low attainments because of their complex needs. However, they make good progress in relation to their starting points because they are given an individualised curriculum which is well matched to their particular needs.
- All groups of students, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, girls and boys and students with different special educational needs and disabilities, achieve equally well. The very small number of students from heritages other than White British also achieves as well as their peers. Very good care and support ensure that students with the most complex medical needs are able to learn and make good progress.
- Pupil premium funds are well used to enable parents to support learning and to give students additional educational opportunities after school. As a result, students eligible for the pupil premium are, overall, attaining at a higher level in English at the end of Key Stage 4 than students who are not eligible for the premium. In mathematics they attain at the same level as their peers.
- Because of the very small numbers of students in some year groups, it is difficult to establish accurately overall trends in achievement over time. However, the detailed information which the school gathers to monitor students' achievement indicates that virtually all students achieve the challenging targets which are set for English and mathematics, with a good proportion exceeding the targets.
- Students' individual records demonstrate that the students make good progress in English and mathematics, as measured by P levels, when compared to students working at a similar level nationally.
- Students make good progress in developing their communication skills because questioning is good and there is a good focus on speaking and listening. Staff are skilled at adapting communication methods for students' individual needs. For example, students with ASD make good gains in learning to use signs and symbols to communicate, whilst some students with PMLD are taught to communicate through eye pointing. As a result, they achieve well and develop skills which enable them to make choices and communicate their needs.
- Because literacy, including phonics (the sounds made by letters), is taught well, students make good progress in matching objects, pictures and words. A few higher attaining students with SLD or ASD are able to read or sign simple sentences and show some understanding of what they have read.
- Parents and carers are pleased with how well their children are achieving. For example, one parent commented, 'Pupils achieve 100% plus.'
- Students in the sixth form make good progress in acquiring life skills, such as learning how to use money. They attain an accredited qualification in personal progress and the vast majority move on successfully to colleges of further education.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved well since the previous inspection and is now consistently good on all three sites.
- Students' progress is carefully assessed in lessons and good photographic records, and detailed notes, demonstrate well the good progress which students make. Assessment is mostly used effectively to plan work which is well matched to individual students' learning levels.
- All students have detailed and specific targets which are typically referred to well in lessons. As a result of this personalised approach to learning, all groups of students make good progress over time. However, on a small number of occasions, where a few activities do not offer enough challenge for higher attaining students or the pace of the activity is a little slow, students'

progress is not as good as it could be.

- Teachers and support staff use resources very well to stimulate the students. For example, students with PMLD in the sixth form show real enjoyment and engagement when they follow their individual plans in the sensory room.
- Classroom management is strong. Support staff are well deployed and highly effective. They provide a good level of support, whilst at the same time encouraging students to work as independently as possible.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and staff know the students very well. They are good at giving students praise for effort. However, verbal and written feedback to students is not always specific enough to enable students to know exactly what they have to do to improve further.
- Teachers have a good understanding of how to use specialist methods, such as visual approaches for students with ASD. This promotes students' learning well. An example of this was in a good literacy lesson for students in Key Stages 3 and 4. The teacher very successfully played familiar music to signal the change of activities and all staff used pictures and symbols to support communication with students. As a result, all students were well included in the lesson and achieved well.

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

- Parents, staff and students all say that behaviour is good on all three sites and during work experience activities. Students say that they feel very safe at school and that there is never any bullying of any kind.
- There are very few exclusions and the number of exclusions is declining.
- Students make good progress in learning to stay safe in the community through activities such as travel training.
- The detailed behaviour plans, which are in place for students with very problematic behaviour, are consistently followed by all staff. As a result, these students make excellent progress in improving their behaviour. For example, one student with ASD told the inspectors, 'My attitude has come on a long way.'
- Students enjoy school a great deal. The vast majority demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and try hard to be as independent as possible.
- Attendance is improving. Most students attend well. The attendance of a few students is low because of medical conditions.

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

- Senior leaders communicate high expectations and are driving the school forward rapidly. The staff team has responded well to the clear agenda for improvement. Staff morale is very high and staff say that they know what the school is trying to achieve and that it is well led and managed.
- School evaluation is strong and used very well to prioritise those areas which will have most impact on raising students' achievement.
- The quality of school improvement planning and the management of the re-organisation and rebuild of accommodation are excellent. As a result, the school's leaders have been highly effective in ensuring that disruption to students' learning is minimised during this period of transition.
- The leadership of the new federation by the executive headteacher is highly effective. Staff and students at Penrose School are benefiting from the injection of new ideas and expertise through sharing specialist staff and a joint management team.
- Teaching and learning are monitored well by the senior leaders. Lessons are observed regularly,

observations are accurate and teachers are given good guidance and training to help them to improve. However, as the school rightly recognises, subject leaders are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching. As a result, they do not have a good enough understanding of how to improve learning in their subject areas.

- Leaders are rigorous in the way they implement teachers' performance management to ensure that salary progression is clearly linked to teachers achieving their targets and improving students' achievement.
- Safeguarding procedures are good and meet all current government requirements.
- Curriculum planning has improved well since the previous inspection. Curriculum delivery is carefully adapted to meet the needs of different learners; this results in good personalised learning and promotes equality of opportunity well. Senior leaders ensure that there is no discrimination of any kind and that good relationships are promoted effectively.
- The local authority has provided good support, particularly with regards to enabling the federation with Elmwood to proceed successfully.
- Links with parents and carers and with a variety of outside agencies, such as medical staff, are excellent and promote students' achievement and welfare very effectively. Parents and carers are involved very well in the life of the school though the Parents' Forum and through training to be parent mentors.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Students are prepared well to live in the diverse culture of the United Kingdom.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors have a good variety of expertise and have accessed suitable training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively. They visit regularly and know the school well. Each governor is linked to a member of the senior leadership team. This enables governors to keep fully abreast with all new developments. Governors monitor the school's performance management systems well. They have a good understanding of the need to base salary progression on performance and of how any underperformance is addressed. Governors have a good grasp of the school's information about students' progress. They monitor carefully how the pupil premium funds are used and the impact of this on students' achievement.

## 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>	123942
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	408928

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 special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	51
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Walker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Hayward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28–29 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01278 423660
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