

Selworthy School

Selworthy Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 8HD

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Selworthy School is a very happy place where staff work well together as a team to provide pupils with rich experiences that meet their needs.
- Pupils make good and often outstanding progress from their low starting points. Achievement is improving very well across all key stages.
- Behaviour is outstanding and the school sets very high standards for keeping the pupils safe. The strong focus on creative development helps make the pupils self-confident.
- The quality of teaching is good, improving and at times outstanding. Pupils get a very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they make good progress.
- The sixth form is good, and there is a good emphasis on providing students with a more adult environment.
- The headteacher and her senior staff have made an excellent impact over the past few years, bringing in very effective strategies to keep the school moving forward. The governors support the school very effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching has not been of a consistent high standard over time to ensure sustained excellent progress.
- Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of their next steps in basic skills of numeracy and literacy.
- Teachers sometimes slow down the pace of lessons, especially when teaching the whole class, and teaching assistants do not always intervene as skilfully as they could.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, involving 12 teachers, all of which were jointly observed with the senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, other staff, members of the governing body, a local authority representative, and four parents and carers.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils, both individually and as a group.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and pupils' books and files.
- There were insufficient submissions to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for the results to be shown. Inspectors took account of the school's own surveys for parents and carers as well as of the views of 63 staff who returned questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Selworthy School provides for pupils with moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties, an increasing proportion of whom have additional complex conditions such as autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- About half of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for those pupils in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and service children. All pupils in Year 7 are in receipt of the catch-up premium.
- Some pupils attend alternative courses away from the school site at Somerset College and at various mainstream schools.
- Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher was appointed from September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - all pupils know the next steps they have to take in communication, literacy and numeracy
 - there is always a good pace to lessons
 - all teaching assistants intervene more quickly to support pupils when required.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good and the most recent results show that an increasing number of pupils are now making outstanding progress. Parents and carers are rightly very pleased with their children's good progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a very good beginning in school because of skilful teaching and the excellent relationships that the staff establish with parents and carers who may be anxious and diffident.
- Pupils who are admitted later in their school career, often after negative experiences in other schools, settle in swiftly because staff are consistently understanding, kind and tolerant so that progress accelerates.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their lives. All go on to purposeful education, training or residential care, armed with qualifications and awards which reflect their abilities and skills.
- Pupils make good and often outstanding progress in communication, literacy and numeracy skills and in personal, social and health education. Their excellent personal development means that they have a very good attitude toward lessons and learning that helps them move forward quickly.
- Progress in communicating, speaking and listening is especially strong because of the very skilled, specialist support provided.
- Pupils write well and display a good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make when they read a range of materials.
- The school is very good at identifying pupils who are starting to fall behind in their basic skills, particularly if they are identified as vulnerable, and takes action straight away that gets them back on track.
- Pupils regularly practise their mathematical skills in real-life settings, such as in outdoor education and shopping, although staff sometimes miss opportunities to do this in the classroom.
- Lesson activities generally stretch individual pupils but progress is occasionally hampered when teachers hold pupils too long in a whole-class group or do not sufficiently emphasise what individual pupils need to do next to improve their basic skills.
- Progress in physical education (PE) is good, because the school makes good use of the additional government funding to pay for a specialist teacher in the subject. This has resulted in many pupils already beginning to reach the performance levels of which they are capable.
- There are no differences overall in the progress from their starting points of the different groups of pupils, such as key stage groups or gender groups. The most-able pupils make good progress across all subjects.
- Pupils with autism make good progress and are able to participate fully in lessons because of the skilful use of specialist strategies, such as visual timetables and aids to communication.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make very good progress and learn quickly to show their preferences and needs, because of the high-quality resources such as the sensory studio.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those targeted for the Year 7 catch-up funding do just as well as other pupils because the money is used very effectively to provide additional one-to-one or small-group support.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Teachers talk enthusiastically about their

work at the school and this shows in the way they share their passion for their subjects with the pupils.

- Teachers work hard to bring to life the learning of new communication, reading, writing and mathematics skills. They devise exciting activities, such as producing and publishing their own book or running the community coffee morning, so that pupils are well motivated to learn and see the relevance of acquiring additional basic skills.
- The school has a rich range of technological resources, such as interactive whiteboards and iPads, and most staff are adept at using these resources to enliven learning. For example, teachers video ongoing activities and simultaneously play the images back to the pupils so they can see themselves and others as they learn.
- Where teaching is very strong, teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and precisely match the activities to suit each pupil in the class. For example, in a very successful lesson for pupils with profound learning difficulties, the pupils loved creating a poem about one of the seven dwarfs. The pupils were wrapped up in the activities which used a full range of sensory resources to meet each pupil's requirements. For example, each dwarf was represented by a different piece of music.
- Most teachers and teaching assistants work very well together as effective teams. Staff listen and respond well to pupils, helping them to remain engaged in their learning. Occasionally teaching assistants do not step in quickly enough to draw the pupil's attention back to the task or to interpret the activities so that the pupil can move on more rapidly.
- Teachers are very committed to preparing the pupils well so that they can move on with confidence to the next key stage or life stage. There is a strong focus on giving pupils the opportunity to develop the independent learning skills that they will need in the future.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is carefully planned and learning is accurately assessed so that the children have a smooth entry into Year 1. When pupils move up, they hit the ground running because the receiving teachers know exactly where the pupils are in their learning and what they need to do next.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and takes place in the two separate sites away from the main school. Most lessons have a distinctive, more adult feel, and the language and content are age-appropriate. Teachers continually review the range of awards the students can undertake so that everyone has a good opportunity to enjoy success.
- Assessment procedures are meticulously carried out. Throughout the day, classroom staff assess each pupil's learning so that teachers know what has been learned and what needs to be done next. Pupils are also regularly involved in assessing their own efforts. Teachers have devised innovative ways so that even pupils with profound difficulties have the opportunity to evaluate their own success.
- On the few occasions where teaching is less effective, pupils have too little time to work at their own level on their own or in small groups. This occasionally occurs when teachers spend too much time talking to the whole class.
- Not all teachers are skilful at incorporating the pupils' individual targets in basic skills into every lesson and throughout the day, or in reinforcing these with parents and carers. This means that pupils do not always know their next steps in learning, and parents and carers are not able to support their children's progress as much as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well throughout the day and through its rich and varied curriculum.
- Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to take responsibility for themselves, for others and for their school community.
- Pupils say that they love coming to school and parents and carers state with confidence that their children are safe and enjoy school, as shown by their high levels of attendance.

- Behaviour during lessons and around the school is outstanding, and pupils have very good relationships with staff. Pupils throw themselves wholeheartedly into the activities, spurred on by the enthusiasm of the staff. Lessons are hardly ever disrupted by difficult behaviour.

Staff manage especially well those pupils who have particular needs and difficulties in maintaining attention and learning. The school employs an educational psychologist who gives staff first-rate support to ensure that they have the skills and confidence they require for managing difficult behaviour.

- The school is particularly strong on promoting the pupils' creative development which in turn promotes their self-esteem and well-being. The inspectors observed some lusty singing by all the pupils and staff in a joyous assembly at the end of the day.
- Pupils show pride in their school and in their achievements as seen by the way they politely and maturely answered visitors' questions and read out loud to them.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to express themselves both as individuals and in a group. Through the school council pupils provide good evidence for their views and express them confidently. For example, pupils recently argued for and successfully gained an increase in the number of mathematics lessons.
- Pupils recognise and understand about bullying in its many forms. Parents and carers, staff and pupils all say that bullying is virtually unknown. All pupils spoken to said that they would turn to any adult in the school if they had a concern, fear or personal problem.
- Pupils, parents and carers understand the dangers of internet misuse, because the school has made this a focus and has gained a national award in e-safety.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The very effective headteacher and leadership team are open, honest and always looking for ways of doing things better. They have driven progress extremely well since the previous inspection and have made sure that pupils' outcomes have continued to improve relentlessly.
- The senior staff have developed a much wider leadership group who all feel that they are accountable and responsible for improving the school directly. This is one reason why the rate of progress is increasing fast, as can be seen by the strong improvements in achievement in the most recent figures.
- The leaders have successfully engendered a palpable, reflective, thriving community spirit among everyone in the school. This can be seen in the way in which all the staff, including lunchtime assistants, reception and premises staff, have attended workshops and learned how to sign and support the pupils' communication. Everyone feels part of a successful team and there is a shared desire for improvement.
- Staff talk about how privileged they feel to work at the school, and the Ofsted questionnaire returns show that staff are unanimously behind the senior leaders' and governors' drive for continuing improvement.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for teaching and has driven a focused and systematic development of teaching across the school, underpinned by very rigorous assessment processes that leave no stone unturned in identifying possible underachievement.
- The school has a very good relationship with the local authority that, through the school improvement officer, provides prompt and expert support to the senior leaders and governing body.
- Senior staff, key stage leaders and subject coordinators are very clear about how well they and the school are doing and have a clear understanding of the steps needed to improve the quality of teaching further. Monitoring is rigorous and best practice is shared, through teachers visiting each other's lessons for example.
- There are very good procedures for managing staff performance and staff appreciate the way in which they receive positive support if there are areas of their work where they are not as skilful

as they could be. Professional development is given a high priority and is always supported.

- The school is very proficient in analysing information about pupils' academic and personal performance. Leaders at every level monitor pupils' progress information regularly and thoroughly and produce user-friendly reports for staff, parents and carers and governors. Governors regularly scrutinise whole-school data so that they have a good understanding of the performance of different groups in the school.
- The curriculum is very strong, varied and interesting so that pupils gain in self-confidence and come to delight in their learning, especially through creative and practical activities such as the choir and whole school theme days like the origami day. Subject specialists provide expert knowledge, for example in communication, PE, music, science and mathematics. Pupils often refer in their conversations to the residential visits where they experience life away from their normal routines and develop independence.
- The school has very strong partnerships with colleges, schools, local businesses and a farm, which are used very well to give pupils the opportunity to pursue additional subjects that may be useful when they leave school. The school frequently checks to see that pupils who are taught away from the school site, such as at college, receive a good quality of education.
- The school runs a very successful and well-used outreach programme for parents and carers, professionals and local schools. The programme offers advice, support and loans of expensive equipment to anyone who needs it in the Taunton and wider geographical area.
- There are excellent partnerships with parents and carers. They feel very well informed about their children's learning and love the immediate access they have to staff through texts, emails or in person. They appreciate all the extra things the school does to involve them and are clearly confident that the school is well led and managed.
- Every pupil is treated equally and as an individual so that there are no differences overall in the progress from the starting points of the different groups of pupils, such as key stage groups or gender groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body and the team of governors are skilful, knowledgeable and carry out their duties very effectively. They have made sure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up, is used well and value for money is obtained. They know how the additional physical education funding is to be spent, and have procedures in place to check on the impact of this spending. Governors supervise very efficiently the process for managing the performance of staff and they make sure that staff pay reflects the level of performance. The governing body knows about the strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' progress and teachers' performance. Safeguarding, safe recruitment issues and health and safety are always a priority and these requirements are met very well.

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	123943
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	426713

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathryn Boorman
Headteacher	Karen Milton
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2010
Telephone number	01823 284970
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