

# Somerset Progressive School

Bath Farm House, West Hatch, Taunton, Somerset. TA3 5RH

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–10 July 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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

### This is an outstanding school because

- Most students make outstanding progress and achieve well as a result of the teaching, which is consistently good and much of which is outstanding.
- Teachers have an excellent understanding of how to help and support students with special needs. They have very high expectations of students' work and behaviour.
- Each student has an individual timetable, which is carefully planned to ensure that they make excellent progress.
- Students thrive in a nurturing family atmosphere. They say they feel safe and their behaviour is very good. Most students attend very regularly and the attendance of some has improved dramatically since joining the school.
- The senior leaders know the school very well and have ensured that the high standards of teaching and achievement are maintained. Improvements are secured due to rigorous management plans.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards)(England) Regulations 2012, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was undertaken with half a day's notice. Ten lessons were observed, some jointly with senior staff. Meetings were held with leaders, staff and students.
- No responses to the Parent View online questionnaire were available. Questionnaires from 14 staff were considered. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a parent and representatives of four placing authorities.
- Written evidence was examined, including documents related to meeting the regulations, work in students' books and schemes of work.
- The proprietor had applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a material change to the current age range of the school by changing it from 11 to 16 to nine to 19 years of age. This proposal was considered as part of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Somerset Progressive School, previously known as New Horizon Centre, was registered in 2001 as a day special school to provide education for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and are on the autistic spectrum. There are currently 16 students attending aged 11 to 16 years, 15 of whom have a statement of special educational needs.
- There are 15 students who are looked after children and are cared for in nearby children's homes. The school is located in an extended farmhouse with adjoining buildings set in four acres of land near Taunton in Somerset. The headteacher took up post in March 2014.
- The school uses off-site provision for physical education and practical activities.
- The last Ofsted inspection took place in September 2011.
- The school aims to 'provide specialist support and quality opportunities through individualised learning programmes that are carefully matched to individual needs to secure positive outcomes for each student'.

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

- Maintain the quality of teaching so that all is of the highest standard by:
  - ensuring that assessment is effectively integrated within the planning of students' work
  - fully implementing the planned management of staff performance to maintain excellence in teaching and learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Achievement of pupils

### Outstanding

- The majority of students make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. This is as a result of a very well devised curriculum which is relevant to their needs. It is combined with excellent pastoral care and effective mentoring.
- Almost all students have a statement of special educational needs. The requirements of their statements are fully met and detailed individual education plans are devised for each student. The students have daily opportunities to apply their reading, speaking, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects to good effect.
- Students enter the school at varying times and their attainment is typically below that expected for their age. This is due to lack of attendance and previous disrupted schooling. Students told the inspector that they had settled well at the school and received support from staff. They believe that they are benefitting from being at the school. They are now making up lost ground because of the care and support they receive. The school successfully re-engages students in education so well by providing a nurturing environment and uncompromising high expectations of behaviour and work.
- Students make outstanding progress over time, especially in English and mathematics, based on their starting points. This is because students are catching up on the basic skills or building well on previous knowledge. Students are given very good support in English with very regular help, especially with reading. Many students read on their own with understanding because the text is well chosen. Those students who have fallen behind are helped to make rapid progress. This makes a strong contribution to their success in all subjects. Students are making rapid gains and closing the gap in their learning to bring them in line with national standards of attainment.
- In mathematics, the planned activities are often based on real-life experiences such as food technology, animal care and Forest School. One day each week, students cook for the whole school. This helps them to develop their basic number skills well, for example in weighing, measuring and estimating, in order to understand how mathematics can assist them in life.
- Students are well prepared for their future. The school enables them to gain externally accredited qualifications, such as GCSEs, Entry Level GCSE and functional skills qualifications. Past students have achieved well in relation to their capabilities in subjects such as English, mathematics, science and art. Many gained very commendable grades.
- The school prepares students for the next stage of their education well. Leaders have recognised that some students in Key Stage 4 are not yet ready for life outside school, due to their difficulties. Older students commented that they wished to stay on at the school to gain more accreditation ready for college entrance. For this reason, the school has sought to make a material change to the age range and has made suitable plans to bring this about.

### Quality of teaching

### Outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good and much of it is outstanding as students make sustained progress in lessons and over time. This is because teachers provide them with individual activities that engage and challenge them. This work has been carefully planned to meet their needs and staff know that they can do it independently. As a result, students respond positively to the challenge, generally work hard and attend lessons.
- Teachers take into account any information available from previous schools and form initial detailed assessments to establish individual starting points. Students are given challenging learning targets, which are reviewed every half term to help them achieve better grades.
- The quality of the relationships and interactions that take place is a significant feature of the teaching. Some small group work takes place in Forest School and outdoor education. Students enjoy group team games in physical education and in theme weeks.

- The school day runs smoothly. The well-established routines help students to become used to life in school, and as a result, the students generally behave very well in lessons. Teachers deal with any minor disturbance very efficiently so that there is minimum disruption to others.
- Teachers' insight into how students learn most effectively ensures that lessons proceed smoothly and are productive. Varied and interesting activities and imaginative learning strategies enthuse the students.
- Teachers monitor students' progress in lessons through skilful questioning and use the information well to adapt their teaching. This keeps the students engaged in learning as they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students are aware of their targets both for learning and behaviour and these are integrated into every lesson. New assessment systems have been put in place recently, which are effective. The school has identified that assessment is not yet fully integrated within the teachers' planning; although work has begun, this aspect has yet to be fully embedded. Students' work is well marked and they are given constructive guidance on how to improve.
- The skilled learning support assistants, who are well directed by the teachers, play an important role in supporting learning and the progress students make.
- The curriculum is very well designed to meet the specific needs of the students. It covers all the required areas of learning and is taught using a topic-based outdoor learning approach. It is well documented and used effectively by staff. Forest School and outdoor learning are used very effectively to promote students' social skills, interaction and communication skills.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

## Outstanding

- Students display very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to achieve well. They are now making up lost ground because of the care and support they receive. They confirm that staff foster excellent relationships and want the students to achieve well. Students respond positively, behave very well in lessons and generally want to please the staff who they appreciate are trying their best to help them. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy.
- Students' attendance is now very good, and a great improvement for some students who had not attended school previously for extended periods. Students confirmed that they enjoy school and it was the one constant feature in their lives. They made many comments such as 'I am happy here...the staff are here to help me...this feels like a big family...I am getting on really well in my work.' They were happy to show visitors around the school and took pride in knowing the different types of poultry and to be careful as the goat liked to follow and to bite when one was least expecting it.
- In keyworker sessions, students interact confidently with staff, sharing their anxieties and how they have overcome some of their problems due to staff support. Students' growing self-esteem, self-confidence and improving social skills are effectively fostered through role-play, team sports games and outdoor education. The staff provide excellent role models.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is excellent. There is an appropriate range of policies and procedures for child protection and staff training is fully up to date for safeguarding. The students confirm that they feel safe and have a clear understanding of bullying, including cyber-bullying, but do not think bullying is a problem at the school.
- The school's promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is thoughtful and wide-ranging. The curriculum enrichment activities are excellent. This enables students to thrive in a caring and nurturing learning environment. They are becoming receptive to new ideas and are developing knowledge of their own and other cultures, and racial harmony is promoted effectively. Regular exercise and healthy eating contribute effectively to students' physical health.
- Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

**Leadership and management****Outstanding**

- The leadership and management, under the new headteacher, are outstanding. The proprietors have embedded good practice and procedures. They hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account through performance management. The headteacher has devised a well-focused school improvement plan based on robust self-evaluation. Although only in post for a short time, he has improved the quality of education and achievement.
- The leaders have a very clear vision for the school. They are ambitious and realistic in their planning to achieve this vision and in driving forward constant improvement over time. The school has been through a period of change with a new headteacher and is now better organised and runs effectively. Strong line management procedures ensure that staff feel very much part of the team and are held to account and given due credit for the impact of their work.
- The headteacher has worked very effectively during the short time he has been in post to raise standards. He has set up a new programme to monitor teaching and staff appraisal, extended staff professional development and established a more effective senior management team. More effective systems to track and evaluate the students' progress have been put in place. Staff have reviewed all the students' individual education plans and statements and ensured that parents, carers and placing authorities are kept very well informed. This has had a very positive impact on students' academic and personal progress.
- The senior leaders' priority was to improve students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance in order that they could put down the sure foundations for teaching and learning to develop. This has proved to be successful for the vast majority of students and the teaching, curriculum and students' achievement are much improved. There is strong capacity for further improvement in the future.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and improved to meet the specific needs of the students. It has had a very positive impact on the students' high levels of achievement and behaviour and provides extended opportunities for external accreditation.
- Staff are all extremely positive in their response to the questionnaire. Representatives of placing authorities were very complimentary. They commented about the excellent communication with the school, the way that their students had settled so well and the students' rates of accelerated progress, many after years of non-attendance.
- The school's safeguarding systems are well maintained. All staff have been checked for their suitability to work with children and the information is accurately recorded on the required single central record of staff appointments.
- The proprietors have ensured that all of the independent school regulations are met. Robust policies and procedures effectively promote the welfare, health and safety of the students. The premises and accommodation meet the requirements. All the required information for parents and carers is provided, including a suitable complaints policy.
- The school's application to change the age range from 11 to 16 years of age to nine to 19 years, was approved during the inspection.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133527
<b>Inspection number</b>	447462
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6203

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	16
<b>Proprietor</b>	Embrace Care Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Ted Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jason Goddard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20–21 September 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£34,125
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823 481902
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