

# South Somerset Partnership School

8, Buckland House, Buckland Road, Yeovil, BA21 5EA

**Inspection dates** 9–10 September 2014

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- All staff have a clear shared vision which they are firmly following to make the school be outstanding.
- Good teaching, with interesting activities and courses, helps pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make the best progress and achieve the greatest in mathematics.
- Teachers expect pupils to have good attitudes to learning. Pupils show them respect and their behaviour is good.
- Pupils make great strides in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps them to be good members of society.
- Pupils attend school more often than they have done in the past. They learn to keep themselves and others safe.
- Almost all Year 11 pupils continue with their education or get places in employment and/or training.
- Work-related experiences and involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme have helped pupils be ready for the world of work and get apprenticeship places in local colleges.
- The headteacher is an excellent leader and manager. She is trusted and cherished by all involved with the school.
- Leaders, managers, and the governing body have an accurate view of the school. They help teaching get better and set demanding targets for improvement across all aspects of the school's work.
- Across South Somerset, permanent exclusions have reduced.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few pupils who have statements of special educational needs remain on the school roll too long. Their progress suffers as a result.
- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding to ensure the pupils make rapid progress.
- A few pupils do not attend school as often as they should.
- Some outdoor areas are uninviting and too small for pupils to play and learn in.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited five of the six different sites. The inspectors observed one-to-one tuition, and pupils working together in small groups. Nearly all of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders, staff, including the hospital teacher, the leader of the REACH alternative provision, and the Chair of the Area Management Committee. Telephone discussions were held with the Local Authority Strategic Manager for Vulnerable Pupils and with three members of the area management group who are also headteachers of local schools.
- The inspectors took account of the views of pupils, parents, carers and other professionals expressed through the school's records and questionnaires. There were no responses recorded on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to evaluate. Parents and pupils talked informally with inspectors throughout the inspection.
- From discussion and the 25 responses to their questionnaire, the inspectors took into account the views of staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised information about pupils' progress. Records relating to safeguarding and documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work were checked.
- During this inspection, the inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement for children looked after, on free school meals and the most able pupils. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of support services.

## Inspection team

Steffi Penny, HMI Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anne Barrett

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- In 2013 Somerset restructured the arrangements for supporting pupils being educated under Section 19 of the Education Act, its Pupil Referral Unit provision. As part of this, the South Somerset Partnership School was significantly reorganised. Four previously separate Pupil Referral Units were merged under one new leadership team. These units were the Link, Horizon, Yeovil and STEPS centres, all of which were previously inspected separately by Ofsted. An area headteacher was appointed in 2013. There are four centre heads, two of which were newly appointed in 2013. The school staffing also includes advisory teachers from the Somerset Social and Emotional Behaviour Support Service and Team 4 who are adolescent support workers.
- The school is governed locally by an area management group. Many of the members are senior leaders of schools located near to the school's various buildings.
- The Link Education Centre caters for all pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key 4 who are not able to access their mainstream school due to medical or mental health needs. The centre is located in three venues in Yeovil. It has a Key Stage 4 classroom sited at Buckland House. There are firmly established plans to move this to a building on the same site as the Yeovil Centre. The Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 provision is in a bungalow on the grounds of Westfield Academy. There is also a hospital classroom at Yeovil District Hospital. Pupils remain jointly on roll with their home school, with the intention that they will return to it when they are well enough.
- The Horizon Centre provides full time, permanent education for those pupils in Key Stage 4 who have been permanently excluded or who are at high risk of exclusion. It is sited on the campus of Yeovil College.
- The Yeovil Centre now works with pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 who are at risk of exclusion using short term intervention projects. While still attending their home school, pupils attend the centre for two days a week for a term. A small number of full-time placements are available for those pupils who have been excluded or who are without a provision to allow assessment for the next stage in their education. It is sited in an old Victorian primary school in Yeovil, but some Key Stage 2 pupils are also taught in the bungalow at Westfield.
- The STEPS Centre has radically changed. It now operates as a satellite provision with intervention projects for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 that mirror those provided in Yeovil. One- and two-day support programmes are also available for pupils in Key Stage 4. Interim provision is also provided for pupils awaiting referral to the Permanent Excluded and Vulnerable Pupils Panel.
- The school has 12 placements of 15 hour programmes available through the Virtual Classroom, supplemented by home visits from linked tutors.
- The school supports mainstream partner schools, providing outreach support for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- The school uses the REACH alternative provider and some pupils attend work placements.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll varies frequently. The vast majority of pupils are on a dual roll with a mainstream school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and do not have a disability or statement of special educational needs.
- A high proportion of pupils are entitled to the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals. For the dual pupil placements, this money is retained by the other school because it is anticipated that the pupil will return full time to their home school.

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

- Improve the outcomes for all pupils who have a statement of educational needs or an education health and care plan, by ensuring with the local authority and other partners that:
  - these pupils spend a minimum amount of time on the school roll and are speedily placed in appropriate provision that best meets all of their needs
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make accelerated progress, particularly in English, science and humanities, by building on the work being done in mathematics that is proving to be so

successful.

- Ensure that all pupils attend school as often as they should.
- Improve the quality and access to outdoor spaces so that all pupils have more stimulating and attractive areas to learn and play in.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### Good

- The headteacher has worked relentlessly to create a single harmonious community from disparate units with their own ways of working and recording information. She has successfully developed a strong team of hard working staff. The staff questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the school.
- Staff are proud of the difference they make to pupils' lives through their good teaching and excellent role modelling. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Providing equal opportunities for the whole school community is central to the school's character.
- Staff benefit from good training and opportunities to undertake further professional development. Morale is high.
- Stable relationships are established with parents and carers. They are strongly encouraged to be, and increasingly are, fully involved in the life of the school.
- The school's development plan shows that the headteacher and centre leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The close links with other education providers, agencies and teams are helping the school to evolve and improve.
- School data and some other pupil information are inconsistently presented by the different centres. The headteacher is aware of this. As part of the school's development plan she has employed an external consultant to provide an electronic tracking system that will cover all aspects of the school's work and pupils' progress. Whilst in the early stages of development, it is already picking up patterns to be further explored. It is palpably beginning to be a powerful tool to maintain and build upon strengths in performance, helping all staff to challenge any complacency.
- A large proportion of pupils on the school roll are entitled to the pupil premium. Last year the school had five sole registered pupils, for which they received pupil premium funding. However, the school ensures that all pupils are treated as though they are entitled to the funding and last year spent £25,000 on this. As part of the allocation, they provide a free breakfast and lunch for all pupils to ensure they are not hungry, and activities in the summer holidays that help develop pupils' life skills, such as cooking.
- As part of the sport funding the school has acquired bicycles for pupils. They successfully learn how to ride them proficiently and to repair and maintain them. This is helping them to learn new skills and increase their understanding of living a healthy lifestyle.
- The individualised courses and programmes of study are a significant strength of the school. The curriculum includes a strong and successful emphasis on increasing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in tackling issues of equality.
- In addition to being able to study subjects typically found in mainstream schools, other experiences are successfully used to help target individual pupils, or groups of pupils, needs. For example, the alternative provider, REACH, ensures excellent one-to-one and small group work that helps significantly improve social and emotional development for those who need it. Mandala Therapy supports those who have experienced domestic violence and/or bereavement. The Forest School provides outdoor experimental learning for those in Key Stages 2 and 3, helping pupils' reintegration into school.
- Some of the outside spaces attached to the school building are not fit for purpose. They are unattractive, and in some cases too small. This hinders pupils' playing and enjoyment. In addition, it hampers teachers using outdoor areas as extensions of the classrooms for learning activities.
- The local authority has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. The Local Authority Strategic Manager for Vulnerable Pupils is able to support and challenge the school in equal measure because he is kept well informed by the school, and involved with it through the governance.
- **The governance of the school:**  
The area management group provides strong support and challenge to the school leaders. Through training and experience, members are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are provided with accurate information that allows them to monitor effectively the work of the school. In addition, they visit the school regularly and take an active part in improving teaching. Arrangements for the management of the performance of the headteacher, centre leaders, teachers and other staff are clear and robust. Outcomes are clearly linked to pay and promotion. The area management group have a clear system which they follow to set robust targets for pupils' achievements. They maintain a rigorous check on how the school is using its funds, including the pupil premium, to get best value for money. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively and ensure that the school meets all safeguarding requirements.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****Good**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The pupils who spoke with inspectors said they felt safe, a view that is endorsed by the school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour is good because it is carefully managed by staff. Through consistent routines and good adult support, pupils quickly learn what is expected of them. Good relationships between all adults and pupils result in a safe, calm and purposeful working environment.
- The school is an orderly and carefully organised community. There is no graffiti. High quality displays and attractive internal decoration are kept clean and tidy, enabling pupils to take pride in their work. The school has a zero tolerance of any form of bullying or poor behaviour. On the few occasions when these occur, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- Carefully designed programmes help pupils to develop their understanding of the risks of gang culture, extremism, and those associated with substance misuse, unsafe sex and the potential risks when using social media. In addition, pupils learn about democratic and political processes along with the contribution of others to a multicultural Britain. This is successfully preparing them to be good citizens.
- Virtual Classroom teachers help to keep the pupils safe when completing their studies online. They report any absences to the senior leader and follow up with telephone calls and home visits to check pupils are keeping safe and understand what they are learning.
- Overall, attendance is lower than seen nationally in most schools and a few pupils have continued to refuse to attend either the school or their dual placement. Nevertheless, the attendance of the vast majority of pupils improves whilst at the school and is nearly always significantly better than in their previous school.

**The quality of teaching****good**

- Teachers quickly get to know and understand the needs of individual pupils. For example, the Virtual Classroom teachers are based in the centres which means that, when pupils are ready to attend the centre, a firm 'learning bond' has already been created. This helps the pupils to settle in quickly, be more relaxed, feel safe and ready to learn. Pupils get off to a cracking start because the teachers already know the concepts that the pupil has struggled with the most and have identified the best ways to help them learn. This is done particularly well in mathematics.
- Teachers have a good range of expertise and skills. Subject specialists are used throughout the school. This enables pupils to achieve the top GCSE grades. It also helps them to develop good workplace and life skills.
- The teachers are increasingly working with mainstream schools. This helps them to improve their own skills and, in turn, share their own expertise. For example, the school is providing an after-school club for a local school, and other teachers share training days so that they can keep up to date with the latest ideas for mainstream lesson activities.
- The school is in the process of developing new systems and protocols for assessing pupils, marking their work and sharing information. Over the last year, documentation has been updated and a common format has been established for all centres. Senior leaders and managers have identified where inconsistencies remain across the different centres and in subjects. They are working hard to eliminate them.
- The quality of assessment by teachers within and across subjects has improved over the last year. Judgements made by the school are accurate and externally moderated. Consequently, staff at all levels have a more robust measure of pupils' starting points.
- Marking has improved and more attention is given to link it directly with pupils' targets and what pupils need to do to improve their work. Written feedback to pupils is improving. Comments are now more detailed. Through this challenge, correction and support, pupils have a clearer idea how to make their work better, quicker.
- Regular observations by senior leaders and members of the area management group provide staff with clear guidance on how they can improve their teaching. When it is not good or outstanding, effective support is put in place so that teaching is getting better.

**The achievement of pupils****good**

- Most pupils join the school having missed considerable amounts of schooling due to medical, emotional or social difficulties. Typically, pupils' academic attainment when joining the school is below average for their age.
- Most pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Pupils eligible for support through additional funding make as good progress as others, and often better. Boys and girls, the more able pupils, and those looked after by local authorities make progress at a similar rate and their achievements are comparable. More able pupils can, and do, get high grades in GCSE subjects.
- The school and the local authority are aware that a few pupils who are identified as requiring a place at a special school stay on the school roll far longer than they should because there are limited spaces in such schools locally. Their progress suffers as a result and is not as good as their peers.
- The school works hard to help pupils catch up. Whilst at the school their rate of progress is faster than found typically for other pupils over the same period. However, the gaps in their knowledge and understanding are often so great that their attainment by Year 11 remains below national averages.
- Pupils with medical conditions work hard and learn as often as they can, either in the hospital and/or the virtual classrooms. As soon as they are able they physically attend the centre. Because their learning is maintained they make at least good progress in a suitable range of subjects and learn to enjoy the company of other children. Sometimes pupils are entered early for GCSE examinations. This is because they need to spread the exams over a number of years due to their medical conditions.
- Pupils who have previously been disruptive and disaffected learn to turn their lives around and start to enjoy school. Those who were previously permanently excluded from school tend not to get permanently excluded again. Those who were at risk of exclusion learn how to manage their feelings so that they stay in their home school and do well.
- Pupils study a good range of courses at levels that are appropriate to their capability. Full-time pupils gain GCSEs or equivalent qualifications in a good range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, history and geography. Nearly all pupils make more progress and attain best in mathematics compared with other subjects seen in mainstream schools.
- Careers guidance is good. For the past two years almost all Year 11 pupils have taken up post-16 placements in education, employment and/or training. Pupils successfully gain apprenticeships at local colleges and complete fruitful work placements for example making shepherd huts, working with motors and doing vehicle maintenance.

## 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>	134697
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	448148

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	43
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sam Crabb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Perris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01935 382028
<b>Fax number</b>	01935 382029
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hperris@somerset.gov.uk">hperris@somerset.gov.uk</a>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

