

New Siblands School

Easton Hill Road, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2JU

Inspection dates

9–10 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- New Siblands School provides an outstanding education. The headteacher, his leadership team and the governing body work with steely determination to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Staff are united in their drive to deliver the school vision, 'achievement, belonging, celebration'. Teamwork across the school is exemplary. Leaders invest in staff and help them to develop their skills. Morale is very high.
- Leaders successfully adapt their improvement plans according to their assessment of the needs of pupils. They look outwards, drawing on the expertise needed to provide excellent professional development for staff.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently outstanding. Staff are well-informed and have a very good understanding of the needs of pupils. They use a wealth of well-researched strategies such as short bursts of sensory activities to ensure that pupils are able to access learning.
- Teaching in early years is also outstanding. Children receive imaginative and carefully tailored support that helps them to feel secure and to enjoy their learning.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils are outstanding. The school is committed to preparing pupils for their futures. Therefore, there is much emphasis on developing pupils' independence and their ability to communicate.
- Behaviour across the school is exemplary. It is a calm and positive place. Skilled and thoughtful staff help pupils to feel secure and to have a strong sense of belonging.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are exceptionally well personalised. The range of work experience, enterprise and practical learning offered to students prepares them very well for their future lives.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide and increasing range of agencies, including a variety of therapists, so that their individual needs are met. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that this additional support for pupils is well coordinated and evaluated.
- Pupils make very good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. Partnerships with parents are particularly strong. As parents said, 'This school is a dream' and 'Nothing is too much trouble.'

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the coordination and evaluation of the wide range of therapies provided by the school so that pupils receive thoroughly effective support for their health and care needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by an experienced and ambitious governing body, leads a school that provides a safe, secure and very successful learning environment. His enthusiasm to promote the highest aspirations for both pupils and staff alike is infectious. Due to the investment in high-quality professional development, staff are highly motivated to continue to improve their work.
- Leaders provide a rich menu of experiences that help pupils to learn about the world around them in a way that is appropriate for them. There are many visitors to school who share their experiences and knowledge of the world. Pupils take part in a wide range of fundraising days. Pupils also learn alongside pupils from mainstream local schools, for example taking part in sporting activities together.
- Pupils also make visits within the local community, including residential trips. Older pupils have carefully tailored work experience placements that help to prepare them for their next steps.
- There is no one-size-fits-all. The curriculum is highly personalised and organised to meet each individual's needs. Each pupil has a carefully adapted timetable of activities and a variety of learning approaches are planned according to each pupil's needs. As a result, pupils across the school make very strong progress from their starting points.
- Additional funding is used and evaluated very effectively. For example, Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding has been recently used to increase the sensory resources that are available for pupils in mathematics lessons. The school's analysis shows that more pupils are now making better progress in mathematics. Leaders also evaluate the impact of other extra funding such as the PE and sport premium. This funding helps to ensure that communication is effective during sports lessons and that there are plenty of activities where pupils can play sport alongside pupils from other schools.
- The school improvement adviser provides helpful and clear guidance to leaders and governors, particularly to confirm the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.

Governance of the school

- Governance is of very high quality due to the wide experience and skills that governors bring to the school. There is a well-developed strategic plan in place, which provides clarity about the vision for the future direction of the school and the roles and responsibilities of governors.
- Governors know the school very well and are rigorous and precise in their challenge to leaders. This ensures that leaders remain focused on school improvement and outcomes for pupils.
- Governors use their visits to school to celebrate successes but also to identify any further improvements necessary. For example, governors' recent drive to improve parental engagement led to the introduction of a café following school events. Parents are now able to meet with governors more frequently.
- Governors have worked closely with leaders to simplify the assessment system over

recent years so that the progress that pupils make can be carefully checked. This is now in place and leaders can provide a thorough and accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff are up to date with the latest safeguarding advice.
- Leaders frequently rehearse their responses to child protection, especially with the added complexities of the pupils who attend the school. Recruitment arrangements are robust and secure.
- Staff are highly vigilant and show a keen understanding of the additional risks that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities may have, for example through online abuse and exploitation.
- Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the difficulties some parents may experience while caring for a child who has SEN and/or disabilities. Therefore, staff are able to provide support to families that is empathetic and effective while keeping the child's well-being as their focus.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school. Behaviour and relationships seen around the school also demonstrate how secure pupils feel.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Successful learning takes place throughout the day at New Siblands. Every part of the day is a chance to learn. For example, at lunchtimes, staff move seamlessly from lessons through to helping pupils to eat lunch independently and to form friendships with their peers.
- Classrooms are full of positive messages and prompts for pupils. 'Amazing progress' boards show each pupil's specific progress and these are updated frequently. Teachers and teaching assistants have a deep understanding of pupils' learning, health and care needs. Every pupil has a personalised plan that precisely identifies small next steps. Throughout the day, subtle adaptations help pupils to be successful in moving forward and learning new skills.
- There is a palpable, positive atmosphere and expectations are high. Learning is fun and very much about what pupils can do rather than what they cannot. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn more. Resources are of high quality and support many different learning needs, including the use of assisted technology to allow pupils to communicate.
- Communication is fundamental to the successful teaching and learning. Staff use signing, pictures and symbols. They also capture pupils' interest through movement and sound. Teamwork throughout the school is extremely strong. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very effectively. They constantly make adaptations as they review the reactions of pupils minute by minute.
- There is a strong emphasis across the school on developing language. Staff are

knowledgeable about teaching strategies and have a wide 'toolbox' from which to choose. Pupils are helped to learn to read through a well-structured, systematic approach. A beautiful, well-organised and well-resourced library provides a centre for motivating pupils to read, and staff often sing rhymes and read with groups of pupils here.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils' wide-ranging, often very complex needs are also supported by additional therapists such as occupational, behaviour and speech and language therapists. Further work is planned to continue to coordinate and evaluate this additional provision so that leaders can be sure that it meets the needs of pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. A key to this is the care and attention given to pupils throughout the day, including during transition times, when pupils move from one part of the day to the next.
- For example, assemblies reinforce pupils' personal development through exploration of values and key events. Staff show close attention to every detail to ensure that pupils' sensory and physical needs are considered both as they enter and leave the hall and throughout the assembly. Pupils join in with songs that help to structure the assemblies. Lighting is used sensitively to ensure that pupils are not over-stimulated.
- During assemblies and at other times, staff explore sensitive issues that reinforce values such as respect and tolerance. For example, a celebration assembly began with a discussion about Remembrance Day. Older pupils also reflected about a pupil who had sadly passed away and they were reminded about the school's own remembrance garden.
- Relationships are very strong throughout the school. Staff make sure that they help pupils to develop physically and emotionally. Social times such as playtimes are important chances to develop these areas. Pupils have lots to do outside and staff play with and talk to pupils to ensure that they make full use of the time.
- The robust approach to safeguarding includes a strong awareness to ensure that pupils are very well informed about how to keep themselves safe. There are prompts all around the school to remind pupils about how to keep safe on the internet. These are highly visual and accessible.
- Short periods of physical activity, perhaps in the sensory area, help pupils to release energy and ensure that they can settle and focus on learning. Staff plan activities such as this into the day, depending on each pupil's needs. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they take pride in their achievements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond very well to the expectations and to the care and nurture provided. The school is calm and organised. Staff demonstrate their high expectations of behaviour at all times. Achievements of all kinds

are widely celebrated among the school community.

- Staff ensure that pupils have good information about routines and events. Class timetables and individual timetables are regularly shared and revisited throughout the day. This helps pupils to be prepared and ready to adapt their behaviour to each part of the school day.
- Staff work closely and effectively with parents. Daily events are communicated through diaries that go between home and school each day. Parents say that these are particularly helpful.
- Pupils enjoy school and want to attend. The school supports some pupils who have significant medical and physical needs, which mean they need to spend time away from school in order to access the care that they need. Leaders ensure that staff liaise closely with families and the agencies involved, including hospital education services.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The outcomes and targets create individual learning plans. These outline the child's needs across all areas of learning as well as their health and care needs. Individual therapies and interventions are carefully considered and included as needed. Leaders have developed this well-organised system and they ensure that these plans are frequently adapted and adjusted as pupils' achievements are noted.
- Teachers use this assessment information extremely well to adapt their teaching each day. This contributes to the outstanding quality of teaching and learning across the school and, as a result, pupils thrive.
- The school's own tracking of the progress pupils make has been improved and simplified since the previous inspection. Leaders can clearly demonstrate pupils' progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics. Increasing numbers of pupils are making the best possible progress in reading, writing and speaking and listening, with a decreasing number making weak progress. Over the past two years, leaders have put plans in place to ensure that progress in mathematics is as strong. The most recent available data shows that now, just as many pupils make excellent progress in mathematics as in the other areas.
- An evaluation of pupils' workbooks, folders and photographic evidence confirms that pupils make very good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. This includes the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Just as important for pupils that attend this school is how well the school supports pupils' independent skills so that they are able to go on to live fulfilling and independent, or semi-independent, lives. The school is highly successful in ensuring that pupils develop their confidence, self-worth and living skills as they move through the school. In recent years, all pupils have moved on from the sixth form to well-supported college places, employment or training.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in early years is outstanding. The highly personalised and effective teaching and learning seen in the school are also evident in the Nursery and Reception classes. The Nursery supports a small number of children who may have very complex medical needs. The highly nurturing and specialised support offered helps children and their families adjust to the routines of attending school. Staff are skilled and they make sure that children develop positive attitudes to learning as they start their time at the school. In one lesson, to develop very early reading skills, children enjoyed using torches to shine a trail on the ceiling from left to right.
- The positive partnerships with parents continue as children move to the Reception class. Again, an individualised approach enables children to develop their independence. Staff provide prompts and visual reminders to help children understand the routines and timetables for the day.
- The structured early reading programme helps children to recognise words and uses fun activities to help children to listen. In a reading lesson, the teacher engaged children by dropping water from a height into a waiting bowl to a song about fish. Children were delighted. Staff and children went on to use words and signs to sing the song and explore associated sounds.
- The leader for early years ensures that staff are well supported and that their outstanding practice is shared across the school. Parents are very happy with the start that their children receive. A typical comment was, 'We know we are lucky to be here.'
- Welfare arrangements are secure. Staff are aware of any special medical or care risks and arrangements as required.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding and this enables students to make very strong progress, both academically and socially. Students really like their school and particularly the post-16 centre. They feel safe and supported, and are particularly polite and caring to each other. Students understand how to keep themselves safe as this is solidly embedded in the curriculum.
- The leader ensures that the 16 to 19 programme study programmes are highly individualised for each pupil and include a variety of practical skills. All students undertake mathematics and English courses, matched to their learning needs.
- Students are able to participate in a wide range of work experience placements. Appropriate support is provided: some can attend with very little support, while some require much more. These placements are developed alongside students and aim to meet students' aspirations for their future employment.
- The school provides independent careers guidance, which focuses on developing students' own voice to enable them to describe their own hopes. This guidance is very effective as all students move on to employment, training or education courses.

School details

Unique reference number	109404
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10008817

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Tubb
Headteacher	Andrew Buckton
Telephone number	01454 866754
Website	www.newsiblands.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@newsiblands.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- New Siblands School provides education for pupils who have severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. There are also an increasing number of pupils who have autism.
- Due to the nature of the severe and complex learning difficulties of pupils, formal assessments are rarely appropriate.

- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- A school improvement adviser visits the school regularly in order to support and moderate school self-evaluation.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning along with senior leaders throughout both days at both sites.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body and the school's improvement partner. The lead inspector also spoke to two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils' views and looked at pupils' workbooks and folders.
- A meeting was held with parents who wished to give their views. The nine responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as a number of emails from parents that were sent to the school during the inspection.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documents, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance, the school's information on pupils' progress, governor minutes, the school's evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors also met with teachers and subject leaders. The 73 responses to an online survey for staff were taken into account.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Malcolm Willis

Ofsted Inspector

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