



Elmfield School for Deaf Children

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109385
Local Authority Bristol, City of
Inspection number 288358
Inspection date 7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Sarah Mascall

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Greystoke Avenue
School category	Community		Westbury-on-Trym
Age range of pupils	3-16		Bristol BS10 6AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 9030366
Number on roll (school)	58	Fax number	0117 9030370
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Keith Evans
		Headteacher	Rosalyn Way
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school that caters for pupils with severe and profound hearing loss. Attainment on entry is well below average, because of the nature of the pupils' special needs. Nearly a third of pupils have additional special needs and all have a statement of special educational needs. There is an Early Years department which at present has five children. The majority of pupils are White British, although a small number of pupils are refugees and/or asylum seekers. For most pupils, British Sign Language (BSL) is their first language. The school serves ten authorities and the socio-economic background of pupils is varied, although nearly a third are eligible for free school meals. A new site was established in April 2006 for secondary-aged pupils in a newly built mainstream school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Elmfield is a good school. Its strengths lie in ensuring that pupils have the skills to become confident communicators and develop into mature, independent young people. This is achieved through the effective leadership and management of the headteacher and her senior staff. They have ensured that all staff have effective signing skills and there are high expectations that pupils will develop a good understanding of deaf culture and how to survive in the hearing world. Despite the huge task of establishing a new site, the headteacher has been successful in ensuring that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements remain good. Although standards remain below average because of pupils' special educational needs, they make good progress in their learning. They commented that they feel they are doing well, and this is supported by parents' positive views of the school. The youngest children get off to a good start in the Early Years class because the quality of education provided for them is effective. Throughout the school, teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs to ensure work is matched to their ability. Lessons are often practical and pupils clearly enjoy their work. The systems for ensuring pupils are well supported and cared for are good. Because of this, pupils feel safe in school and make good progress in their personal development. Their confidence in their right to have a say in what goes on in school is reflected in the very strong school councils on both sites. Pupils have influenced change and have a very clear view of what needs to be improved.

Senior staff are committed to enabling pupils to have better opportunities to work and socialise with their hearing peers and the move to a mainstream site for secondary pupils reflects this commitment. However, the curriculum for secondary-aged pupils, although satisfactory, has not been sufficiently developed to enable them to fully access all aspects of the mainstream school. Several pupils felt strongly that they do not have enough opportunities to be involved in working with their mainstream peers in subjects such as drama and performing arts. Because of this, the school's curriculum, although good for primary-aged pupils, is satisfactory overall. The school has also recognised that there are limited opportunities for pupils and children in the primary department to experience working in mainstream schools. This prevents pupils from building on all the good skills they have learnt and increasing their confidence in working and socialising in mainstream settings. The senior team know the strengths of their school well. Areas for development are recognised appropriately and effective action taken. The improvement in the management of mathematics in the primary department is a good example, although it has not yet had time to impact on primary pupils' achievements, and at present they are making satisfactory rather than good progress in numeracy. There has also been a good focus on ensuring staff are accurate in their assessments of pupils' achievements, and this has led them to a better understanding of how well pupils are doing overall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve primary-aged pupils' skills in numeracy to enable them to make better progress.

- Introduce more creative and artistic experiences for secondary-aged pupils.
- Provide primary-aged pupils and those in the Early Years with more opportunities to work and socialise with hearing pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although pupils' special educational needs mean that standards are below average, their achievements are good. They make particularly good progress in their communication skills. Right from when they start school in the Early Years class, they learn new signs and recognise the importance of concentrating on watching and making best use of their residual hearing. As a result, most pupils become fluent signers and can express their ideas and thoughts well. This is reflected in their good achievements in nationally accredited signing courses. Pupils make good progress in learning English and by the time they leave school they are confident in communicating their ideas on paper. They achieve well in a range of accreditation that is matched to their ability, some gaining GCSEs and others gaining passes in Entry level and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses. Secondary-aged pupils, though, do not develop their skills in the creative subjects as well as in other areas of the curriculum. Primary-aged pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics, although this is now improving through the swift action taken by the school. The good focus on developing pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) together with their good progress in literacy prepares pupils well for meeting the challenges that they will encounter as they grow older.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop into mature, sensible young adults who have considerable confidence in putting forward their ideas. Through the school councils, they have been particularly active in improving facilities in the dining room and ensuring that the food is healthy and of good quality. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their attendance is good. They like all the clubs after school, which they feel help them keep fit. This was evident in the enthusiastic discussion about the dance club which is due to start soon. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to mix with hearing pupils at break and lunch times, but opportunities for primary pupils to develop their skills in a range of settings are limited. This prevents them from practising and developing all the good skills they have learnt.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and have a good awareness of and involvement in anti-bullying strategies and how bullying should be dealt with. This is reflected in the orderly and safe community within the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the needs of those less well off than themselves and work together to decide which charities they will support each year. Their contribution to the community is reflected in the decision to give the produce from their harvest festival to a local old people's home because there were a lot of hearing impaired people there.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teamwork between teachers and other staff is very evident in the smooth running of lessons. Hearing and deaf teaching assistants and communication support workers participate fully in lessons and contribute greatly to pupils' learning, reinforcing signs and encouraging them to focus and concentrate. Occasionally, though, they step in too quickly and do not give pupils time to try first before giving them the answer. Lessons are practical and visual and basically good fun. Pupils are confident in their ICT skills because teachers use ICT effectively to support learning, especially interactive whiteboards, which pupils also use well to show what they know and understand.

Good developments in assessment have resulted in teachers having an effective understanding of pupils' different abilities. As a result, work is matched well to individual needs to ensure all pupils make good progress. This is shown particularly in the use of questioning, which is adapted well to enable each pupil to be able to respond and contribute.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In the primary department, pupils are given a good range of experiences that support their learning well. The focus on developing pupils' signing and their English as well as their understanding of deaf culture enables them to become effective communicators. There are strengths in the secondary curriculum, particularly in extending pupils' skills to enable them to achieve accreditation in BSL. However, opportunities for pupils to participate in creative and performing arts with their mainstream peers are limited to art and physical education. Most, though not all, pupils expressed the wish to be able to be involved in more subjects such as music and drama. There is a good range of accredited examinations for the oldest pupils, although the school recognises the need to extend its work-related programme further and provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care of pupils is given a high priority and, as a result, pupils feel safe and understand safe practices. There are rigorous health and safety arrangements and child protection procedures are good. Effective procedures enable pupils to improve their behaviour and pupils show a good understanding of how and why these procedures work. Pupils are well supported through close links with other services such as Connexions. At present, however, there is limited support for pupils' speech and language development. Although this situation is out of the school's hands, senior staff are aware that this is inappropriate and are doing as much as they can to maintain support for pupils until new therapists are appointed. The school has developed good

partnerships with parents and works closely with them to ensure pupils are supported effectively. Pupils are developing a good understanding of how well they are doing. This is particularly evident in the secondary department, where pupils are responsible for negotiating and setting their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

High quality leadership and management are key to the success of this school and are reflected in the high aspirations of all staff in providing the best for all pupils. This ensures that the school is well placed to improve and develop further. Strong leadership by the headteacher has enabled the school to change direction and develop a more inclusive setting for its pupils. This has taken a huge amount of time and effort but its success is shown in the way pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching continue to be of good quality. Because of the style of leadership, staff are given ownership of decisions and many have been keen to take on responsibilities. Decisive leadership enables a quick resolution to any situation where concerns are raised, such as in the management of mathematics in the primary department. Through good monitoring, senior staff know the strengths and areas for development of the school. Subject managers have been particularly good at checking how well pupils are progressing and in subjects such as ICT and English they have been effective in raising standards. The school recognises that there are areas for development within the secondary provision and has rightly established dates for reviewing management roles. Governors have been very supportive in the move to new premises but recognise they need to have a clearer understanding of what goes on in school. The increasingly effective use of the data on pupils' achievements is ensuring that the school establishes a set of criteria by which it can more clearly judge whole-school achievements.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making Mr Kell and myself so welcome. We very much enjoyed talking to you and trying to improve our signing skills! Your school is a good school and does a lot to help you prepare for life in a hearing world. Because of this you become confident, sensible young adults and make good progress in your personal development. We were impressed by the sensible way you talked to us about the good things at school and the things you thought could be made better. You considered that you do well in school and this is true, particularly in becoming good communicators. You have good teachers and all staff help you improve your signing. The fact that you pass a lot of exams is a credit to how hard you work. You do well in learning English and in using computers. Pupils in the primary school do not do so well in mathematics but the school has already taken action to try to improve things for you. We were particularly pleased at the way you had brought about change in the dining room and improved the quality of food. The range of subjects you study is satisfactory in the secondary department. Many of you talked to Mr Kell about wanting to have more opportunities to do subjects such as drama and music, though you all do well in the other subjects you study. Although there are opportunities for older pupils to talk and work with hearing pupils, there are not enough opportunities for those of you in the primary school to do the same.

Your school is well led and the senior staff have ensured that there are good systems in place to make sure you are safe and well cared for. Senior teachers have a good understanding of what the school does well and are using the information they have to develop a good picture of whole-school achievements.

- We have asked the school to do three things.
- Make sure primary-aged pupils do better in maths.
- Introduce more creative and artistic experiences for secondary-aged pupils.
- Provide pupils and children in the primary department with more opportunities to work and socialise with hearing pupils.

We wish you well for the future.