



New Siblands School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109404
Local Authority South Gloucestershire
Inspection number 288362
Inspection date 28 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	Easton Hill Road
School category	Community		Thornbury
Age range of pupils	2-19		Bristol BS35 2JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01454 866754
Number on roll (school)	59	Fax number	01454 866759
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Stephen Woods
		Headteacher	Paul Casson
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small special school caters for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. A small number have autistic spectrum disorders and many have additional special needs. All have statements of special educational need and, because of pupils' special needs, standards are well below national expectations. Pupils come from the area of South Gloucestershire and the vast majority are White British. A very small number of pupils are cared for by the local authority.

At present there are no pupils under the age of 4 and only a few are of Reception age. Equally, in post-16 there are only a small number of pupils in Years 12 and 13 and they are educated with pupils in Year 11.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

New Siblands is an outstanding school with many fine qualities. This is a school that is not happy with second best. The leadership team and teachers are constantly checking on how well pupils are doing and looking for areas that can be improved. Because of this, although, understandably when compared with national data for all schools the standards pupils reach are still well below average, pupils' achievements are excellent. Parents confirm these findings, describing the school as 'wonderful' and comment that the 'staff challenge the children so that they get the absolute best from them'. Staff have very high expectations and there is a real sense of teamwork within the classes which ensures that all pupils, regardless of their special needs, make excellent progress and benefit from excellent teaching. The youngest pupils in the school get off to an exceptional start and make the same excellent progress as older pupils. Links with other schools, which include giving advice and support for pupils in mainstream education, are very strong.

Parents are extremely positive about the huge gains their children make socially. These are evident around the school, and the excellent care, support and guidance enable pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal development. Considerable attention is paid to enabling pupils to become independent and to learn to cope in different situations, including going to college and work-related experiences. Pupils clearly enjoy school and all the different learning activities they can be involved in. The curriculum is good overall and is very well planned. However, systems are not rigorous enough to ensure that what is planned always actually happens, particularly for subjects such as humanities. As a result, there is not an effective way of ensuring that pupils always cover all aspects of the curriculum in sufficient detail.

Pupils develop a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and show a very good knowledge of how to keep safe. Behaviour in particular is excellent and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. The school council plays an important part in the school's development and allows pupils to be involved in making decisions. Recent initiatives have enabled a number of pupils to take more responsibility for their learning through setting their own targets for improvement and the school is looking at ways to enable all pupils to be involved in this.

A key reason why the school is so successful is because leadership and management are excellent. The hard work and commitment of the headteacher and senior colleagues have ensured that the school is continually improving and developing. As a result, staff are very self-critical, feeling that they can always do better. Because of this, they are too modest in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness, which they judge to be good. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- put in place better systems to ensure that all pupils receive all of the learning experiences that are planned for them, particularly those linked to subjects such as humanities

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Although standards are well below those expected nationally, all pupils make excellent progress. This is because teachers regularly check how well individuals are doing and ensure that they are always making the progress they should. The very youngest pupils make excellent progress and benefit from lessons with older pupils. They rise to the high expectations of staff and learn at the same pace as their classmates.

Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties make excellent progress because they are included in many of the same lessons as their peers. Their experiences are matched well to their needs, and separate lessons enable staff to reinforce what they have learnt and develop their skills further. Pupils in post-16 classes make equally good progress because the curriculum is focused on preparing them for their next stage of education.

Pupils develop their basic skills in literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology very well. As a result, they are very well prepared to meet the challenges that they will encounter when they are older. Pupils make particularly good progress in writing. There is clear evidence of pupils improving their skills and by the time they reach post-16, pupils can record their ideas and thoughts well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is reflected in the fact that pupils, by the time they leave school, are developing into sensible mature young adults who are keen to take on responsibilities and be as independent as they can. The biggest gains, parents feel, are in their children's social development. They are proud of the fact that they can take their children out in a range of different settings and know they will cope well. This is evident throughout the school. Pupils behave exceptionally well and respond very well to staff's strategies to support them in managing their behaviour. Pupils work well together and are polite and friendly. Cultural development is very well promoted to enable pupils to have an understanding of different communities and faiths. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in the school community and, through the school council, they make effective contributions to the life of the school.

Pupils say that they enjoy school and it is clear from their happy faces that they do. Parents comment that their children do not like being away from school and this is reflected in pupils' good attendance. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know whom to go to if they have problems or are worried about something. Within the context of their special needs, they show a good understanding of healthy eating and make the most of playtimes to go out and play games and run around. Pupils have recently had an opportunity to begin to take responsibility for their own learning through setting their own targets. With support, they are making sensible decisions about what they need to do next to improve. Although this is at an early stage and is

not fully embedded within the school, it further reflects the high expectations for pupils to become independent responsible adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There are many strengths in teaching, the most important of which is the detailed planning that enables all pupils to make excellent progress. Work is matched very well to the wide abilities within each class and to the needs of each individual. Excellent teamwork is evident because support staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. They work extremely well with small groups of pupils and ensure that pupils stay on task and complete the work set. Very occasionally, opportunities are missed to change activities when the work is not challenging or stimulating enough, particularly for those pupils with ASD. However, staff ensure that these pupils are brought back on track quickly when their attention is lost and they manage pupils' challenging behaviour well.

The level of challenge is excellent. The typically very high expectations of what pupils can achieve were reflected in an exceptional lesson for primary-aged pupils in which they were able to recognise words such as 'reflective' and explain what they meant and identify signs for different areas such as for 'physical' activities and 'reading'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' achievements, particularly in developing their basic skills. Planning of the curriculum is very good and ensures that a good range of experiences are planned to support their needs well. There is not, however, a rigorous enough process to ensure that all subjects are covered in sufficient depth over the three-year rolling programme, particularly with regards to history and geography. Part of the problem is that timetables do not always make it clear what is being taught. A very good range of activities take place but these are not evident from information given on the timetable and therefore senior staff cannot be sure of what is being covered in those sessions. There is an excellent range of visits and activities that support pupils' learning very effectively and enable them to be fully involved in the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school's success and this ensures that pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority. The support and guidance for pupils is excellent and enables them to make outstanding progress both in their personal development and in their achievements. A strength lies in the regular checks and assessments of the progress made by pupils, to ensure they are achieving

as well as possible. Procedures to keep pupils safe are very good and all statutory checks are in place. Consequently, pupils work in a very safe and caring environment. Staff are very well trained to meet the needs of pupils, particularly in managing their behaviour and preventing pupils from causing harm to themselves or others. Pupils' medical needs are very well cared for because nursing staff work closely with teachers to ensure pupils are well looked after.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The senior management team are very effective. They complement each other's skills very well and have been very successful in moving the school forward at a rapid pace. For example, all the issues from the last inspection have been dealt with extremely well, particularly in terms of improving assessment. Their commitment and enthusiasm is shared by staff and as a result, there is a sense of a whole-school approach to doing the best for the pupils. Improvement planning is very detailed and reflects the school's drive to always be better. It is informed by wide-ranging and highly focused self-evaluation, including extremely rigorous systems for checking how well pupils are doing and what can be done to improve further and extremely thorough procedures for gathering the views of parents, carers and other stakeholders. Managers at all levels carry out their responsibilities very well and this ensures that very effective action is taken to develop provision. Governors are very supportive of the school and are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are looking at developing their role further so that they can be more rigorous in checking what the school does.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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 very much for talking to Mike and me and letting us watch your lessons. We very much enjoyed our visit and were very impressed by how well behaved you were.

You go to an outstanding school which helps you make excellent progress in all the things you learn. Your teachers make sure each one of you makes the best possible progress in lessons and they are helped a lot by the support staff. Because of this, teaching is excellent.

Your parents said that you did really well in getting on with people and knowing how to behave in different places. You have done exceptionally well in improving your skills in your personal development and are growing up to become sensible and responsible young adults. It was good to see that you are now helping to choose your own targets and although this is still new, it is a good step to help you become even more responsible. It was very clear how much you liked school and all the lessons you do. The school plans your work very well but it needs to find a way of making sure that you learn about all the different subjects in the same amount of detail.

You are very well cared for and you told us that you know whom to go to if you have any problems. You are very well supported in your learning and teachers keep a very close eye on the progress you make so that they can be sure you are doing as well as you can. The headteacher and his deputy lead the school exceptionally well. They and the staff know exactly what they need to do make the school even better and have lots of ideas that will help you even more.

I have asked the school to make sure that you study all the different subjects that are planned for you.