



Southbrook School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 113634
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289677
Inspection date 26 September 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Megee

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bishop Westall Road
School category	Community special		Topsham Road
Age range of pupils	6-16		Exeter EX2 6JB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01392 258373
Number on roll (school)	100	Fax number	01392 494036
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Hilary Green
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Southbrook School provides for pupils with communication and learning difficulties within the city of Exeter and the surrounding area. Half the pupils have moderate learning difficulties, one third have autism, and the rest have either severe learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with autism has increased rapidly over the last few years. The boys outnumber the girls by three to one. Pupils start at the school with exceptionally low standards when compared with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We feel our child is very well provided for at Southbrook,' said one parent. The inspection confirms that this is a good school with some outstanding features.

Pupils take great pleasure in school, and attend well. Although the standards they reach are very low compared to the national average, they achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. This is because of the excellent personal support and good teaching that the school provides. The school is admitting a rapidly increasing number of pupils with autism, and it is struggling slightly to modify its provision to match and take account of all these pupils' needs, with limited resources. As a consequence, the progress for some pupils in this group is satisfactory but slower than that of other pupils. In many areas, the school has made considerable improvements in the last few years. For example, the accommodation has been significantly enhanced with the provision of specialist rooms for all subjects. The headteacher and senior managers share a very clear vision for the school and have successfully brought all staff, governors and parents together as a team to take the school forward. Hence they have good capacity to improve still further.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the good range of subjects and activities available for them and say that they especially like more practical subjects such as design and technology, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). There are opportunities for pupils to be included in mainstream programmes in Years 10 and 11. However, there are not enough opportunities for younger pupils, and this may restrict their progress. Many of the pupils say that they would like these opportunities to be available. Parents value the broad range of opportunities and are pleased that their children are doing 'real high school subjects'. Pupils really enjoy the educational visits, especially the residential ones.

Teachers ensure that activities are customised to meet the needs of each pupil. The school has a very well-structured way of recording and analysing the progress which pupils make. The pupils receive excellent care, guidance and support. The result of this is that pupils' personal development is outstanding. The pupils know they are secure in school and behave well. There is a little bullying but there are very good systems in place to deal with this to everyone's satisfaction. Pupils are very well aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and they tuck into the nourishing but delicious cooked lunches with great enthusiasm.

Pupils participate very productively in the wider community and take on important responsibilities in school for helping and taking care of each other.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision so that all pupils with autism achieve as well as other pupils.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, pupils are given the opportunity to learn in a mainstream school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils arrive at the school, most have poor literacy skills and lack confidence. A few find it difficult to settle into lessons and can become upset or even aggressive, especially when put under pressure to achieve. The school provides excellent support and good teaching that help restore and maintain their confidence so that they achieve well and make good progress against the challenging academic targets which are set.

Achievement in examinations such as entry level certificates and GCSEs was very good this year. One parent said: 'In her previous school, my daughter was just kept "amused". I couldn't believe it when the teacher here mentioned her taking exams. We were delighted.'

Over recent years, the school has been admitting pupils with increasingly complex needs, particularly autism. The pupils of lower ability who also have autism make satisfactory rather than good progress. This is still a relatively new group for the school, and support to meet their needs is still developing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show great care and concern for each other. Behaviour is good, although a few pupils, especially those new to the school, may get very upset. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community and within the school. An example of this is the successful new peer-mentoring system through which older pupils listen to, and support, younger pupils. Pupils encounter an exciting range of cultural experiences. For example, there are residential experiences in France, visits from a Japanese ceramic artist, and fundraising to buy a cow in Africa. Pupils gain a good range of skills to prepare them for their future lives, particularly through work experience and college links.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff know the pupils well and there are really good relationships between adults and pupils in classrooms. Teachers' planning is good and ensures that they build on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. There is very effective use of interactive whiteboards to assist learning. Lesson objectives are clearly set out for the pupils at the beginning of lessons so they understand what they will have to do. Occasionally, pupils are given undemanding tasks such as colouring in worksheets. In a few lessons, teachers do not manage immature behaviour as effectively as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, and is enriched by a good range of clubs such as a circus skills, football and weekly youth club. Music and art are given a suitably high priority. Pupils speak about the interesting activities that they enjoy and about the wide range of out-of-school activities, especially the residential experiences, which include sailing weeks, visits to London, activity weeks and Ten Tors. A good variety of visits and visitors adds to pupils' experiences.

The school provides good opportunities for groups of its pupils to interact with mainstream groups, especially through sporting links such as golf, cricket and football. However, it does not provide sufficient opportunities for individual pupils to attend lessons in a mainstream school. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of most of its pupils, but has yet to provide a completely suitable curriculum for pupils with autism, especially those with lower ability.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff have pupils' welfare very much at heart and this is the reason why the quality of care, guidance and support is so good. The very good induction procedures ensure that close relationships with parents are established immediately on referral, and this partnership is a great help in promoting pupils' welfare and care. 'It's so nice, when you ring up with a problem, for the school to say "We'll work on that together"', said one parent. The school has a very thorough approach to child protection, security checks on staff, health and safety procedures and risk assessments. This means that pupils feel safe and secure at all times. Pupils report that they feel very well looked after and know what to do if they have concerns or worries. Pupils help to set their own challenging targets alongside teachers and are given regular accurate feedback on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school leaders have successfully maintained and built upon the school's overall effectiveness since the last inspection. All leaders, staff, pupils and parents share the head's clear vision of a school that is continually determined to improve and where each individual child is important. An excellent example of the strong teamwork that is evident in the school is the way in which important information about each child is communicated between all staff. Parents say: 'When you talk to a teacher about your child, you can be sure that every other person who needs to be involved, including the headteacher, will know about it in a matter of hours'.

Governors work hard in support of the school and are effective as 'critical friends'. A good range of monitoring is carried out on all aspects of school performance and the

school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It is well aware that the provision for pupils with autism is not yet fully developed, and this is preventing some of those pupils from achieving as much as others.

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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 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	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	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?	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	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 for helping me with the inspection.

This is what I found out:

- Your school is a good school, with some bits that are excellent.
- You make good progress in your subjects.
- You really like coming to school.
- You know a lot about keeping fit and healthy, and enjoy really good lunches.
- You are taught well.
- You behave well.
- You take very good care of each other, especially through the peer mentoring.
- Your headteacher and other adults work hard to improve the school and take exceptionally good care of you.

There are just two things that I have suggested that your school needs to work at:

- Some of you told me that you would like to try learning in a mainstream school, and I think you should all have that chance.
- The school needs to try hard to improve what it does for those of you who have difficulties like autism.

Perhaps you could help by working even harder so that your teachers will know that you will do well if you go to a mainstream school.

Thank you once again for all your help during the inspection, and I hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your school.