



# Three Ways School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 135069  
**Local Authority** Bath and North East Somerset  
**Inspection number** 294261  
**Inspection dates** 24–25 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Alan Dobbins

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit	<b>School address</b>	Cynthia Moss House
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Combe Park
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19		Bath BA1 3NJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 824223
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	139	<b>Fax number</b>	01225 824223
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Charles Gerrish
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Dyer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is a 'generic' school providing for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with moderate, profound and multiple needs, social, emotional and behaviour needs and complex needs arising from physical and sensory difficulties and autism. It is a new school created in September 2005 from the amalgamation of three 'categoric' special schools; that is schools that catered primarily for one type of learning difficulty. Most of the pupils come from Bath and the surrounding area; a small number come from neighbouring authorities. All have statements of special educational needs, most are boys and only a very small number are from ethnic minorities. As there is only one student in the sixth form no separate judgement is made on this part of the school. Currently, the school operates on three sites, the locations of the three schools that were amalgamated, but in September 2007 pupils and staff will transfer to excellent purpose built accommodation on a new site. The headteacher was appointed from out of county, but most of the staff are from the amalgamated schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Three Ways School has had a good beginning in difficult circumstances. It provides pupils with a satisfactory education, but many features are already emerging as strengths. The headteacher has made an outstanding start. She is well served by a strong team of senior leaders and by governors, and leadership and management are good overall. Although from three different schools, staff have joined together very well. They quickly recognised the capabilities of the headteacher and now are a team united in support of her vision for the school. They are ready and willing to meet the challenge of rapidly developing the school when the most serious barrier to pupils' achievement, the inadequacy of the current accommodation, is eliminated by the pending move to new accommodation. Given the school's already good start, the capacity for continuing to improve is good.

The relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding and staff take great care of the pupils. Because of this pupils feel safe and are happy and comfortable at school. They attend regularly, behave well and most of the time enjoy working hard in their lessons. They are blossoming as young people and their parents and carers are thrilled by this. They rightly recognise the good progress their children make in their personal and social development as they move toward becoming as independent as possible. In the academic subjects, the standards attained are well below average because of the difficulties pupils have with learning. The curriculum is broadly satisfactory but it is too patchy. The shortcomings in the accommodation and the lack of sufficient specialist computer equipment in almost every classroom limit what can be taught and how teaching can proceed. The teaching itself is good and leads to good learning in the areas taught, but the limited coverage means that, overall, progress and achievement are satisfactory rather than better. This affects all pupils, from the oldest to those in the Foundation Stage.

Assessment and the associated guidance to pupils are developing well, but there is more to do to embed new systems across the school. As a result, though care is strong, care, guidance and support as a whole are as yet satisfactory. In the best lessons data are used well in focusing on individual achievement, but this is not happening in all lessons. Subject leaders are not yet using data well enough to identify how achievement can be raised in their subjects, nor are senior leaders making full use of data to judge the overall effectiveness of the school and to recognise the priority areas for development.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to:
  - inform lesson planning
  - give pupils individual guidance
  - show where achievement and provision should be improved and
  - judge the effectiveness of the school
- develop the use of information and communication technology in supporting teaching and learning

- in the new accommodation, ensure the curriculum is broad enough to meet national requirements and fully matches pupils' learning and additional needs.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The standards pupils attain are well below average because of the nature of their learning difficulties. Emerging data are showing good achievement in many lessons in the subjects, but satisfactory achievement overall. The picture is of competent teachers and well trained teaching assistants teaching well, within the limitations of the small size of many classrooms and the lack of specialist teaching rooms for many subjects, including science, design and technology, art and design and physical education. They are not always able to plan lessons as they want, or give pupils a wide enough experience in many subjects. The limited availability of computer equipment in almost every classroom adds to these difficulties. As a result, taking the full range of expected subjects into account, over time pupils do not achieve as well as they could in many lessons.

In the Foundation Stage, children are prepared satisfactorily for their work at Year 1. The destinations of last year's leavers, mostly places for further training, show they were prepared well for life after school, and their successes on an increasing range of relevant accredited awards confirm this. There is no evidence that any group of pupils, such as those with the most complex needs, makes better progress than any other group.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding. Pupils trust and respect staff and quickly go to them if they are troubled or want support. They readily accept the advice and guidance they are offered. This helps them make good progress in their personal and social development, even though the target setting procedures aimed at promoting improvement are not yet well enough established to ensure that all pupils have an appropriate understanding of where they are trying to go. Behaviour is good; even those who have difficulty in always controlling their behaviour know what is expected of them. The good level of attendance reflects pupils' genuine enjoyment of school. Older pupils are prepared well for their futures, have good awareness of the need to be healthy, to stay safe and to know about the economic world. One parent's comment that she is 'so happy' with the progress her child is making in living as independent a life as possible is echoed by many.

Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Younger pupils quickly learn to recognise what is right and wrong, and that being kind and considerate to others is an important part of growing up. Through lessons, and during assemblies, pupils have many opportunities to become aware of the lives of others in different places, and the link with a school in Africa is used very well in explaining that some children

have different lives to theirs. Through the school council and, for example through bidding successfully for money to purchase bicycles and tricycles for the school, pupils gain a good experience of working together and of the economic expectations of the adult world.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and the teaching assistants are good at using specialist skills and strategies to meet pupils' wide-ranging learning needs. For example, they use strategies such as the Treatment and Education of Communicationally Challenged Children (TEACCH) well, and use equivalently well many procedures to support communication, including signs, symbols and the exchange of pictures. Class sizes are small and the teaching assistants are very well qualified. Staff know their pupils well and take good account of this when planning lessons that, most of the time, are relevant to pupils because they match well with their learning needs. The outstanding relationships pupils have with staff help them be comfortable as learners. They know that to do their best they need to work hard in lessons and behave well, but they also know that they will have fun doing this.

In some lessons the full impact of the considerable expertise of teachers and their assistants is not realised. Planning is too often limited by the small size and awkward shape of many of the classrooms, the lack of adequate specialist teaching rooms, and by being unable to use computers to add colour, movement and sound in support of learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is changing as subject leaders prepare for the challenge of leading and managing their subjects having, for the first time in the new accommodation, facilities that enable the full breadth to be taught. The amalgamation of the schools already means they have to take account of the full range of pupils' difficulties with learning, over all the years of the school. Although their roles are developing well, more work is required by all the subject leaders to broaden pupils' learning experiences to make sure they cover national requirements and that learning is always relevant.

There are strengths. Good links have been established with outside services, such as the Connexions service which is effective in helping prepare older pupils for their life after school; also with, for example, the physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists who are helping pupils gain greater access to their learning. Links with other schools and colleges have been quickly established. Years 10 and 11 pupils learn about college life through taking part in 'taster' courses and a small number gain particular benefit from spending time in other schools to prepare for their GCSE examinations. Links with the local community are also developing well and pupils are

benefiting from good opportunities to work with local artists, musicians from different cultures and sports coaches. Opportunities to take part in residential visits are increasing and these have already provided high quality social experiences for a small number of pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Procedures for child protection, health and safety and the assessment of risk are rigorous. Pupils say they feel safe at school, like the staff very much and that there is always someone to talk with when they are troubled or confused. Parents and carers are sure that their children are cared for very well. Assessment procedures, part of the new system for identifying targets for learning in the subjects and for developing pupils' personal and social skills, are at an early stage. They are well thought through, but as yet are not providing sufficient guidance in helping create for each pupil a 'fully personalised education programme' specifically designed to raise their achievement; an aim for the school. Broader targets, set for pupils at their annual review, have not yet been in place over a sufficient period of time to judge how effective they are in charting learning and personal development over the longer period.

Statutory requirements that relate to statements of special educational needs are met. In part, this is because the good links already established with many agencies and specialists are providing effective support in dealing with pupils' additional needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management, overall, are good. The headteacher has made an outstanding start. She inherited three staff bodies, each with different knowledge of, and expertise in dealing with, pupils with learning difficulties. But, through communicating her vision for the school's future, setting the highest expectations for her own work and forming and embedding systems and procedures that are starting to operate well on each of the sites, she has quickly created a unified staff team that is fully supportive of her. In this, she is helped by a strong team of senior leaders and a good team of governors. Day-to-day management is good and, as a result, each site is calm and organised and the school, overall, is a place where pupils prosper.

The staff at the three sites face a considerable challenge when all pupils, with a very much wider range of learning difficulties than seen at each of the present sites, join together in the new building. The important first steps in preparing staff to deal with this have been taken. Developing the performance management procedures and linking these effectively to relevant training enabled auditing, and the broadening of the skills, knowledge and experience of all staff. The staff are now ready. They feel well prepared because they are better trained, and are committed to establishing a school of real excellence. To achieve this, more development is required and the senior leaders know this. For example, the new assessment system needs to be sharpened as it is not having a sufficient impact on raising individual achievement through guiding lesson

planning. Moreover, data are not being used well enough in judging the progress of pupils, the priorities for future development or the overall effectiveness of the school.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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 us find out about your school. We enjoyed visiting you. We think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We were pleased with many of the things we discovered. We especially liked these things:

- You are growing up to be as independent as possible.
- You try hard at your learning and make good progress in many lessons.
- You behave well.
- Your headteacher has made an excellent start.
- The staff are ready and determined to make the school much better when you move into your excellent new building.

There are a few things that we would like to see improved. We will be very pleased when you move into your new building. Then your teachers will be able to teach you things they cannot do in the buildings now.

Your teachers and school leaders know a lot about how well you are doing. We would like them to use this knowledge better when they plan lessons or help you understand how to improve. We also want them to use the information to plan improvements for the school and decide how good it is.

We would also like your teachers and their assistants to use computers more to help you learn.

We know that you will enjoy your new school. Please make sure that you work as hard there as you are doing now.