

Gibside School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131213
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	301666
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Michelle Chapman
Headteacher	Mrs Sylvia Routledge
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2004
School address	Burnthouse Lane Whickham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE16 5AT
Telephone number	0191 4410123
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

There are significantly more boys on roll at Gibside than girls. The population of the school is changing with an increasing number of pupils with autism and less pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils' complex range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities also includes severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. A very small minority of pupils is in public care and a high percentage of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most of the pupils are White British and very few have English as an additional language. The school has attained the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and Healthy Schools Award. The school has Ofsted registered out of school day care provision, which was inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gibside is a good school. This happy and inclusive school has some outstanding features. It is well led and managed; as a result, has made good improvements since the last inspection and provides good value for money. The school has a deservedly high reputation for their skills and expertise in the education of pupils with autism.

Teaching and learning are good. The school has attained the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark which recognises, for example, their effective use of assessment to establish challenging performance targets. Pupils are supported and involved, as far as possible, in the monitoring of their own progress. Teaching is brisk and purposeful and this, combined with positive teamwork and high expectations, promotes pupils' excellent attitudes to their work and good achievement across the school. It is not appropriate to compare with national standards because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in their communication and social skills and individual children make outstanding progress in some other areas of learning in which they have a particular aptitude. This is also the picture across the rest of the school. Pupils also make good progress in their numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Occasionally, teaching is inspirational and pupils' progress is outstanding. However, in some lessons, time is lost whilst pupils wait their turn and, as a result, learning is good rather than outstanding. Wonderful displays around the school illustrate pupils' success in a wide range of exciting activities.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning with outstanding behaviour and good attendance. Pupils take a full and active part in the inspirational assemblies and very warmly celebrate each other's success. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and are very proud of their work. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, but have too few opportunities to develop their enterprise skills. The staff work very hard to promote a safe environment and an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and, as a result, the school has gained the National Healthy Schools' Award.

The curriculum is good and is carefully matched to pupils' complex learning needs. An exciting range of visits and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum; although, too few activities are provided after school. Pupils respond well to sensory and practical experiences that extend their engagement and participation in activities. The use of music to motivate pupils is particularly effective.

The school's self-evaluation shows that senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school is too generous. Planning for further development in the school is good, but there are too many priorities for improvement with insufficient reference to pupils' achievement.

The school has excellent links with other agencies and this helps to provide pupils with outstanding care, guidance and support. The excellent staff training ensures that pupils' individual and complex learning needs are met. Good links with mainstream schools are used to provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn alongside mainstream pupils close to Gibside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there are a manageable number of priorities for school improvement that are sharply focussed on pupils' achievement.
- Provide increased opportunities for pupils to develop their enterprise skills.
- Extend the provision of after school activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Boys and girls achieve well. The good use of rigorous assessment systems ensures that pupils make good progress towards challenging targets. There is a strong and very effective focus on developing pupils' communication and social skills and this helps them achieve well across the curriculum. Pupils make good progress in their basic skills and become increasingly confident in the use of ICT to extend their learning. Pupils make good progress in science and enjoy the practical opportunities provided; for example, during science week they are involved in investigations alongside mainstream pupils. The displays of pupils' attractive artwork help to create a stimulating learning environment and reflect their good achievement in the subject. There have been major developments in the provision of physical activities and this has been recognised by an award from the local authority. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. However, they make outstanding progress in aspects of their personal development and areas that are specific to each individual child; such as, reading and numeracy. Parents are extremely pleased with this progress as there are, in particular, major improvements in their child's ability to interact with others. The transition to Key Stage 1 is well managed and this ensures that pupils, including those with autism, maintain their good rate of progress and achieve well. Also, in Key Stage 2, pupils of all abilities thoroughly enjoy their learning as they become increasingly independent learners. Higher attaining pupils respond well to tuition to develop their singing and have the confidence to perform in front of an audience.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school, attend whenever they can and, as a result, their attendance is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent. They cooperate extremely well with others, feel very safe in the school and are fully confident in the support provided by staff. Pupils make very good use of the opportunities provided to promote healthy lifestyles. They are very active, eat fruit and drink water regularly. Pupils show good levels of increasing responsibility as they progress through the school. Residential trips provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social and independence skills very well. Their spiritual development is extremely good, helped by whole school assemblies that are inspirational and fully include all pupils in a wealth of activities that capture their attention. Pupils in the school council make a good contribution to improvements in the school. They have many ideas and listen well to the opinions of others. Key Stage 2 pupils have the confidence to take a full and active part in a joint aerobics session with pupils from a local mainstream school. There is a good focus on pupils' basic skills and they are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Typically, the effective use of assessment ensures that pupils' work is challenging and carefully matched to their complex range of learning needs. The staff team work well together, has high expectations and no learning time is wasted. This helps to ensure that pupils develop excellent attitudes to their work and make good progress. A well considered range of strategies and resources are used effectively to ensure that all pupils are engaged in their learning. The careful balance between well structured activities and stimulating experiences provided for pupils with autism is a particular strength of the school and helps to promote their good progress. The staff team know the pupils well and this ensures that pupils' good progress is maintained. At times, very enthusiastic teaching inspires pupils and this, combined with the very skilled contribution of teaching assistants, leads to pupils making outstanding progress. However, occasionally, pupils spend too long waiting their turn to take part in an activity and, as a result their progress is good rather than outstanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good and is carefully tailored to meet pupils' complex learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a strong focus on pupils' communication skills and this has a very positive impact on their learning in other subjects. Also, many activities are provided to extend pupils' ability to work and play with others. Pupils with autism make giant strides in their social skills and their parents are, at times, amazed at their progress. Many practical opportunities are provided for pupils to make good progress in their numeracy skills. The effective use of interactive whiteboards has increased pupils' opportunities to make good progress in the ICT skills. Also, an imaginative range of sensory resources are used effectively, prompting pupils to engage and participate in many stimulating experiences. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage enables the children to make good progress and thoroughly enjoy working towards their learning goals. Pupils learn in a rich and stimulating environment and the displays around the school are inspirational. They celebrate pupils' achievement and reflect, for example, the extensive range of educational visits that so effectively enrich the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers; for example, in shared aerobic sessions. However, the school provides too few activities after school and insufficient opportunities in place to promote pupils' enterprise skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff work very hard to provide pupils with outstanding care, guidance and support. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are particularly robust and, as a result, these vulnerable pupils make the best of their abilities in a safe and supportive environment. Risk assessments are very thorough; for example, educational visits only take place to settings that have been checked out. The staff team ensure that pupils with autism are very effectively prepared to share their learning and play with other pupils in the school. The school has excellent working relations with other agencies that help to promote pupils' well-being. Other agencies are very positive about the high level of expertise in the school to implement, for example, speech therapy and care programmes. The essential care provided for the pupils is carried out

with sensitivity and minimal disruption to their education. The school ensures that parents are fully involved at every stage of their child's education. Parents are provided with appropriate support and training to ensure that they are aware of the approaches being used by the school. A typical comment for parents is that, 'The school provides an environment for pupils to flourish.' The induction programme for pupils is very effective and their transition between the different classes in the school is very well managed. Also, pupils are provided with very good preparation for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders provide enthusiastic and innovative leadership. Responsibilities are effectively distributed amongst the staff, which ensures that they all contribute to the determined drive towards excellence. The continuing professional development provided for staff is outstanding and ensures that the pupils' complex learning needs are met; for example, when teaching assistants cover for teachers. Self-review is thorough, but the evaluation of the overall effectiveness by the school is over generous. Their evaluation that overall their capacity to improve is good; this is an accurate evaluation and reflects the strong teamwork at all levels. Also, the school has made good progress since last inspection. In particular, the governing body know the school well and provides effective support and challenge in order to help the school improve. School development planning is good, but there are too many priorities and they have insufficient focus on pupils' achievement. Parents are confident that the school is well led and managed. The school works exceptionally well with other agencies to promote pupils' well-being.

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Annex A

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?	1
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	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	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	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?	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.

Annex A

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gibside School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE16 5AT

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. You made me feel very welcome and I was greatly impressed with the lovely displays around the school. Your assembly was wonderful and it was a great pleasure to see you all enjoying yourself so much. Particular thanks to the members of the school council that gave up some of their lunch break to talk with me.

I am confident that you are provided with a good education, with some aspects that are outstanding. The headteacher and staff are dedicated to ensuring that you work hard and enjoy yourselves. You are a credit to the school and behave exceptionally well. You make excellent progress in your communication skills and ability to get on with others, including pupils from local schools. The whiteboards are clearly a major success in the classrooms. It is good that you can use the sporting facilities in the school next door. The staff and other people work very hard to provide you with exceptional care.

I left with some suggestions that can help the headteacher, staff and you to make the school even better. The staff team is determined to keep improving and I have suggested that they concentrate on a small number of areas at any one time. Also, you enjoy your activities so much that it would be a good idea for you to have extra clubs after school and more chances for you to learn about running 'little businesses'.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

Lead inspector