

Selworthy Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123943
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314762
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	46
6th form	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Hayden
Headteacher	Karen Milton
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Selworthy Road Taunton TA2 8HD
Telephone number	01823 284970
Fax number	01823 336519

Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Inspection number	314762

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Selworthy School is oversubscribed. Designated for severe learning difficulties (SLD), it also provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and additional complex needs including autism (ASD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). All pupils have statements. Nearly all pupils are White British. The school has achieved the sportsmark, activemark and artsmark gold awards and the healthy schools award. Application planning for specialist status (cognition and learning) is started. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Selworthy is a good and very caring school with some outstanding features. Comments typical of parents' and carers' views are, 'My child loves school'; 'A wonderful teaching staff and head and a lovely atmosphere'; and 'I feel the school is going from strength to strength!'

The inspirational headteacher has outstanding and innovative leadership skills. Her quiet determination to 'raise the game' for each pupil and for her staff, aided by her impressive senior leadership team, ensures that the school never stands still. The pace of change is impressive with a resultant positive impact on raising pupils' achievement, progress and belief in their own abilities. This is despite the complex and challenging needs of pupils whose standards are low. The ongoing process of data analysis is developing well but the school recognises that it requires further refinement so that targets can become increasingly challenging, raising whole school improvement planning aspirations. Monitoring of subject teaching and learning by middle leaders has yet to be securely established and is an area for development.

The pupils are at the centre of all that the school does, which is evident in their happiness. They relish learning and are very proud of their successes and those of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Their behaviour and relationships with each other and with the adults caring so exceptionally well for them are outstanding. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and are able to communicate their needs and wishes in ways that are most suitable for them, including signing or touch. This work starts from their earliest days in the Foundation Stage, where provision is good. Pupils become increasingly independent, developing an understanding of their own strengths and areas for development through their targets and individualised learning programmes. Pastoral care is simply outstanding and making a real difference to pupils' quality of life and to their physical and emotional well-being, aided by the very well used access to outside agencies and expertise. Pupils have increasing awareness of their academic skills through the developing use of self-assessment and the introduction of very good red files that highlight individual progress. The good curriculum provides impressive enrichment activities. There are developing opportunities for older pupils through the 14–19 curriculum, although this is not yet fully embedded. Opportunities for work experience and further education are raising students' expectations. Good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' achievement, which is good. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and of the sixth form are good as is the work of the governing body. Financial management is secure and the school knows itself well. As a result, capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Although standards remain well below the national average, students make good gains in their learning skills. Their impressive personal development and the outstanding care, support and guidance on offer enable students to become mature and confident in their readiness to join the adult world as far as their abilities allow. College and school links are increasing, with students from other schools selecting Selworthy as an accredited course centre. The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet students' needs, including life skills, work-related learning and accreditation. Leadership and management are good, well focused on enabling the best possible provision and outcome for each student.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Standards are much lower than expected levels for their age. Nonetheless, children of reception age make good progress in acquiring basic skills of speaking, listening and communication, including signing. Their personal, social and behavioural development is impressive given their very complex needs. It is aided very well by the close one-to-one attention. The quality of care and nurture is second to none, so they feel happy, settled and safe. The secure accommodation enables good provision for all areas of learning, including outdoor learning. Leadership and management are good, providing children with a positive start.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse and use achievement data to set more challenging targets and better inform school improvement planning.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation role of middle leaders to raise achievement in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is very low. Standards remain low through the school and into the sixth form. However, from very low starting points, the vast majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress over time as they move through the school. There is no significant difference in progress at any key stage or for any pupil group, although boys progress slightly better than girls due to the strong focus on sports. Pupils with regressive or life-limiting conditions perform slightly less well. Ongoing development of analysis, tracking, assessment and monitoring records increasingly highlights individual achievement. It shows that almost all pupils make good progress, with a few making outstanding progress in relation to their prior attainment and capabilities. The very small minority who do not achieve as well as expected are quickly 'picked up' and supported by highly personalised learning programmes to improve their progress. Good progress is maintained in the sixth form. Students are independent and confident, gaining relevant qualifications. Further education uptake has increased over the last two years with all leavers going to college or care placements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils smile on arrival and as they go home because they are full of what they have done during the day. Attendance is good. The youngest children settle quickly, learning to share and be with others. Pupils love fun activities, dressing up in police uniforms, learning how to be safe. They relish stimulating challenges and security of routines like the invigorating morning 'wake and shake' sessions; one said, 'Oh, I'm liking that!' Pupils work hard to improve writing, counting or to achieve their targets. They enjoy using interactive whiteboards, physical education and exhilarating music. A higher attaining pupil touching the bassoon said, 'It vibrates!' Pupils' uptake of healthy lifestyles is impressive, from football to boccia, and for one pupil, success at

national level disabled athletics. Vegetables grow in the garden for 'Soup Thursdays', a gourmet treat. However, pupils have little choice over school lunches.

The way that pupils with autism and other complex needs work, relate and respond in class 'family' groups, is impressive. Relationships and behaviour are excellent. Independence is outstanding with 'bus buddies' supporting independent travel and pupils expected to do much for themselves, building their confidence and maturity considerably. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced in assemblies with success celebrated, vibrant community spirit and exuberant singing. Multicultural aspects are covered well in lessons and by celebrating faith festivals. Community links are excellent with a lively, active school council and high attendance at the Tribe youth club. The Majorca trip is eagerly awaited. Sixth form students provide exceptional role models for younger pupils, sharing break activities. School and employer work experience contributes significantly to students' preparation for college and future life. Pupils are very proud of their school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Seamless teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants who often work one-to-one with pupils, is a significant strength, impacting positively on pupils' learning and enjoyment. Good practice includes short activities that hold pupils' interest, reminders of individual targets, and a lively pace with key vocabulary reinforced so pupils can retain new facts or sensory experiences. Teachers develop good strategies to meet pupils' diverse needs, giving them enough time to respond to a question or to think of an answer. They try to make learning fun, motivating well through praise. Mutual respect between teachers and pupils is strong. Subject knowledge is secure. In a lively food technology lesson, one pupil named a cantaloupe melon; another knew that 'mangoes are healthy for you and very fruity', effectively underpinning pupils' awareness of good diet. However, the use of assessment to support even better learning is not fully embedded.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

There is good adaptation of the broad and fully inclusive curriculum to meet the complexity of pupil capabilities and needs. An increasingly flexible and personalised curriculum is developing, allied to the newly introduced and satisfactory 14-19 curriculum which is not yet fully embedded. However, initial outcomes for ASD pupils are promising. Art, physical education, music, personal, social, health and citizenship education and information and communication technology that threads across all learning activities, are outstanding subjects. Pupils from Foundation Stage upwards enjoy hydrotherapy in the school pool. Enrichment and the extended day are excellent with a strong impact on pupils' well-being. Activities include horse riding, canoeing, inter-school sports, team-building on Exmoor, breakfast, teatime and many other clubs and even Pilates for the staff. Different therapies include music and rebound, aiding pupils' ability to learn. Sixth form students travel with minimal

support to many other providers who offer work experience or college placements, so that they become as independent as possible. Sixth form curriculum provision is good with an increasing range of vocational courses and an accredited centre for learning. A vast range of visits extends pupils' life experiences and visiting artists, dance and theatre groups work with pupils to improve their creative skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils always come first for all staff. That is why pastoral care, welfare, nurture and the attention given to each child and their family are exemplary. The staff know their pupils extremely well and can see when they are not at their best or need cherishing. Excellent and very skilled staff support is provided to enable pupils to develop physical, learning and personal skills as far as is possible. Parents are often surprised and delighted by this progress. New pupils are helped to settle in, getting the right kind of support from school staff such as the home school link worker and skilled professionals from outside agencies, who also regularly train staff to improve their knowledge of pupils' medical and emotional needs. Holistic therapies are well established with some teaching assistants trained in speech and other therapies. Child protection and safeguarding procedures, including health and safety, are robust. Sixth form students and younger pupils receive thorough guidance about their targets, careers options and choices. They are encouraged to self-assess their learning using smiley faces record sheets kept in their own red files. This very good system provides a full picture of pupils' work over time and evidence of their progress against individual education plans and personal, behaviour and learning targets. It forms the basis of the pupil profile that each pupil keeps on leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher leads by outstanding example, most ably supported by her exceptional senior leadership team so that staff share and are inspired by the exciting yet realistic vision for the pupils who are welcomed and valued highly whatever their difficulty. She is very ready to try innovative approaches and initiatives and to make changes that really work. These are having a positive impact on raising academic achievement and on the high calibre personal development of all pupils and students. Leadership and management at other levels, including governance, is good as is leadership of the Foundation Stage and the sixth form. Middle leaders are supportive of their staff but have not yet got to grips with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing their subjects to raise pupils' achievement and outcomes further. Teamwork at all levels, including the empowerment of teaching assistants, is a significant strength and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Analysis and use of achievement data do not always drive the provision of challenging targets to feed into school improvement planning to support even better achievement at all levels. The governing body is supportive, knowledgeable and well informed, knowing the school's strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is good, with the school having a clear picture of itself and its areas for improvement. Professional development is strong, helping to ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's provision. Financial

management is astute, with money well spent in the right areas to secure ongoing improvement. As a result, capacity for improvement is good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
---	----------------	-------

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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	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

You made Mark and I very welcome when we visited your lovely school recently. We enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for telling us so much about what you do at school. We really enjoyed Soup Thursday.

We think that your school is good with many areas that are outstanding. It provides you with a good education. We think that Karen is an excellent headteacher and we know you have excellent relationships with everyone who helps and cares for you so your progress is good; well done! We know that your teachers are really good at making learning fun so that you make good progress. We also know you enjoy some excellent activities provided for you including music, PE, ICT, art and PSHCE and you like going out on trips locally and further away. We think that your behaviour, manners and personal development are excellent and we think sixth form students help you to become mature and sensible. You did not tell us much that you do not like at school, but some of you wanted longer playtimes and more guitar lessons.

Here are the things we have suggested to your school that they should improve.

- We want Karen and the governors to use the information they have about your achievement to offer more challenging targets and plan improvements that will make your learning even better.
- We want your teachers to look at the way that they teach you and how you learn, so that you enjoy your subjects even more.

We are sure that you will all continue to work hard, have fun and continue to enjoy life at Selworthy School.

1 February 2008



Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Selworthy School, Taunton TA2 8HD

You made Mark and I very welcome when we visited your lovely school recently. We enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for telling us so much about what you do at school. We really enjoyed Soup Thursday.

We think that your school is good with many areas that are outstanding. It provides you with a good education. We think that Karen is an excellent headteacher and we know you have excellent relationships with everyone who helps and cares for you so your progress is good; well done! We know that your teachers are really good at making learning fun so that you make good progress. We also know you enjoy some excellent activities provided for you including music, PE, ICT, art and PSHCE and you like going out on trips locally and further away. We think that your behaviour, manners and personal development are excellent and we think sixth form students help you to become mature and sensible. You did not tell us much that you do not like at school, but some of you wanted longer playtimes and more guitar lessons.

Here are the things we have suggested to your school that they should improve.

- We want Karen and the governors to use the information they have about your achievement to offer more challenging targets and plan improvements that will make your learning even better.
- We want your teachers to look at the way that they teach you and how you learn, so that you enjoy your subjects even more.

We are sure that you will all continue to work hard, have fun and continue to enjoy life at Selworthy School.

Best Wishes

Judi Bedawi
Lead inspector