

# Exeter House Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126551
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315582
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Mascall

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2-19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	78
6th form	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Katerinie Gallagher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Mears
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Somerset Road Salisbury SP1 3BL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01722 334168
<b>Fax number</b>	01722 334168

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Exeter House caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs, including pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are also a high number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and a few pupils have sensory impairments. There are a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority.

Pupils enter school with skills that are well below the levels expected at their age and because of the nature of their special needs, standards are very low.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Exeter House School is a good school that enables pupils to make outstanding progress in their personal development. The effective links that have been established with other agencies contribute much to pupils' welfare and are a key element of the strong care, guidance and support provided. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school and its work is greatly valued by them. A number referred to the school as 'brilliant' and their views can be summarised by one parent who wrote, 'We cannot praise this fabulous school enough. There has never been a moment where we haven't been utterly glad we chose it.'

Children benefit from good teaching in the Nursery but progress, although satisfactory, is adversely affected by the poor accommodation in the Foundation Stage. This prevents staff from fully implementing the well-planned play-based curriculum. Despite this, children gradually develop their independence skills, and as they grow older and move through the school, they become very confident individuals who have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and how to stay safe. Pupils clearly enjoy school and much of this is because teaching is good and has many strengths. As a result, pupils, regardless of their special needs, make good progress. It is to the credit of staff that they have achieved this, despite the fact that the accommodation does not fully meet the needs of the pupils. Staff have shown flexibility and resourcefulness in adapting and making best use of the space available. Because of this, even though there is a lack of specialist rooms for some subjects, teachers have been able to ensure that pupils have a broad and varied curriculum that enables them to achieve well. The biggest impact for the school is that there is insufficient space for pupils to have regular physiotherapy during the day and there is limited space for one-to-one work. Despite this, the care and welfare of pupils is good and staff do all they can to support the needs of pupils. The guidance for pupils' learning is satisfactory. Although there are elements of good practice throughout the school, pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do next to improve.

A lot has been achieved in the last three years and this has been a direct result of the very effective leadership of the headteacher. Through rigorous monitoring of the provision, he has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. He has used this knowledge well to encourage staff to take on more responsibilities and to build on their skills. There is good capacity for the school to move forward. Governors are very supportive and visit the school regularly. However, they do not ensure that they have all the necessary information in order to challenge the school and check that pupils are making the best possible progress.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The post-16 provision is well led and this has ensured that it is continually being developed and improved. Teaching is good and, as a result, the students make good progress in their learning. The curriculum is secure and based on developing students' life skills. Good use of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) modules supports their learning well. Through this scheme, they develop their skills in literacy and numeracy further and are well prepared for life when they leave school. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the provision, and the school is aware it needs to improve opportunities for work experience and college courses. It is working hard to establish links with a range of different providers after recent changes to some of their usual sources for work experience. When other

concerns have been raised, quick action has been taken and several parents had positive views, one stating that staff 'have done brilliantly with my son, he's off to college this year, I can't praise them enough'.

Students develop their independent skills well and are very involved in taking on responsibilities around the school. They carry out these sensibly and clearly enjoy the opportunities they are given. They have very positive attitudes to their work and concentrate well. Teachers know their students well and work is well matched to their needs. Opportunities are missed, though, to enable students to have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning. Although space is limited and there are not the usual facilities expected for post-16 students, such as specialist teaching areas, staff have adapted the accommodation as well as they can.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is good and teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge. This is enabling them to plan a range of activities that meet the needs of the children. They use their knowledge well in working on a one-to-one basis and children make good progress in these sessions. However, opportunities for children to develop their skills through play are limited by the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation, and their progress is satisfactory rather than good. Support staff are developing their skills in adapting to the new curriculum and work hard to help children. The recording of the small steps made in children's skills' development during the day is improving but teachers recognise that this needs to be more rigorous in order that the full range of achievements are recorded.

Leadership and management are good and, although recently appointed, teachers have already done much to develop the provision. They are establishing a new curriculum which is very much linked to improving children's skills and learning through play. They are, however, hampered by the very limited accommodation both internally and externally. Whilst improvements have been made, the school has not been able to extend the indoor area and the outdoor play area is unsuited to all-weather play. Good use is made of the school's resources, such as the jacuzzi, to enable children to develop their physical skills.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the accommodation in order to : o enable staff to meet the physical needs of pupils better and have more space for one-to-one teaching o enable children in the Foundation Stage to have better facilities to support their learning.
- Develop a more consistent approach to ensuring pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Improve governors' understanding of all aspects of provision so that they can be more effective in challenging the school to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

From very low starting points, pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with severe learning difficulties achieve well when compared nationally, as do autistic spectrum disorder pupils. There is

considerable importance placed on developing pupils' communication skills and, as a result, pupils make good progress in learning to communicate. They use symbols and their communicators well and all pupils are able to respond to staff. The use of signing by pupils is developing. By the time they reach post-16, pupils' successes are reflected in the accreditation they gain in ASDAN. Last year several pupils achieved well, gaining accreditation in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) 1 in hospitality. A small number of pupils gained passes in Entry Level English.

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

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their behaviour in and around school is extremely good and they show considerable concern and respect for others. In lessons, more-able pupils are patient and helpful with those who take longer to respond to questions. Pupils listen well to each other and are keen to show off their knowledge in discussions with staff and each other, such as when discussing the Olympic Games.

Pupils' understanding of how to stay fit and eat healthily is exceptional. They are keen to be involved in a range of sporting activities, as was evident in the enthusiasm of younger pupils doing physical exercises in the hall. They appreciate the high quality food provided at mealtimes and recognise that it is good for them. Pupils know how to keep safe and move sensibly around school, which is particularly important because of all the equipment that is stored in the corridors. They enjoy school immensely and this is reflected in their good attendance. They show good awareness of the plight of others and are involved in raising funds for those less well off than themselves. The school council has brought about change and has helped to improve areas around the school such as the outside play areas. By the time they leave, pupils are mature, sensible young adults who have high self-esteem and are well prepared for life beyond school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The commitment of staff to the pupils is recognised by many parents. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' special educational needs is particularly strong and is used well to support pupils' learning. Activities are well planned and support staff are effective in helping pupils, regardless of ability, to make good progress. There are examples of good and very good practice throughout the school and teachers are quick to ask for help from each other to ensure pupils gain from their experiences. Staff have developed their expertise in the use of the interactive whiteboards and these are used well, with staff continually looking to extend resources further to enhance pupils' learning. The pace of lessons is usually good, although occasionally it slows when an activity requires pupils to wait whilst each takes a turn. There is a good focus on encouraging pupils' communication skills and the use of pupils' communicators is good. Symbols are used well in most parts of the school to enable pupils to make choices and understand the events of the day. The use of signing is improving. Where it is used well, for example, in reinforcing vocabulary, it is effective, but this is not a consistent practice and opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to use signing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It is based on a thematic approach to learning and this enables the school to respond effectively to pupils' interests. Activities are well planned and ensure that the needs of the different groups of pupils are met well. Despite the fact that there are no specialist facilities for science, art and music, staff ensure that pupils have a good range of learning experiences in these areas. There is a good focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and these, together with information and communication technology (ICT), are integrated throughout the curriculum. The school is developing its systems for monitoring to ensure that pupils get sufficient time in these areas. Opportunities for work experience are very good in Years 10 and 11 but are hampered in post-16 by the restricted availability of suitable placements.

Nearly all pupils take advantage of the good variety of enrichment activities that are available. The range of residential trips is very good and much valued by pupils and their parents. The school makes good use of specialist support through art and music workshops and pupils recall sessions, for example, when they recently played different types of drums. The school is looking to develop an extended day and, at present, there are no after-school activities available to pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The care and welfare of the pupils is a high priority and the school works closely with health specialists to provide as much support as is possible. It has been successful in improving the allocation of time in some aspects of provision, such as speech and language, and is working hard to improve support in other areas such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy. The lack of space for pupils to stretch and move around in is a cause for concern and staff do the best they can to support pupils in terms of their physical well-being. A good initiative has been in the development of links with multi-agency groups to consider pupils' communication needs, which has led to the purchase of new equipment for some that has aided their ability to communicate. The safety of pupils is given a high priority and systems for child protection, the vetting of staff and risk assessments are rigorous.

Approaches to enabling pupils to understand what they need to do to improve are inconsistent. Whilst some teachers make their expectations clear, this is not the case in all classes. There is not an expectation, for example, that more-able pupils will know their targets or be aware of how well they are doing.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Strong, determined leadership has enabled Exeter House to develop and improve well. There has been a good focus on enabling staff to take on responsibilities and staff work well together.

Whilst time has been well used to enable them to undertake aspects of their roles, there has been too much reliance on senior leaders to monitor the provision. The school is rightly putting in place more opportunities for staff to monitor whole-school provision and to share good practice. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of areas for improvement and have taken quick, effective action to bring about improvements. However, senior leaders' very good knowledge of the school is not always accurately reflected in the school's self-evaluation. This makes it difficult for governors to be clear about the quality of the school's provision and to be more challenging in ensuring that the school provides the very best for its pupils.

Governors have been extremely supportive in trying to develop and improve the accommodation. They, together with the headteacher, have done much to adapt spaces and provide additional buildings. However, they recognise that the present facilities do not support the needs of pupils effectively and are working with the local authority to find solutions to the present situation.



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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	16-19
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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	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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	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?	2	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	
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

18 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Exeter House School, Salisbury, SP1 3BL

Thank you for making us so welcome when Jon and I came to visit. We enjoyed talking to you and it was good to see how hard you work. We feel that your school is a good school and that you do well in your learning. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know about.

- You really enjoy going to school and being involved in all the activities.
- You are very good at knowing how to keep fit and what the healthy things to eat are.
- The school is very good at making sure you are safe and well looked after.
- Your teachers know you well and make sure the work you do is right for you.
- The school is very well led and the teachers work hard to do the best for you.
- By the time you leave, you grow up into sensible young adults.
- The school works well with lots of different people to make sure you are well cared for.

To make the school even better we have asked the school to:

- improve the accommodation so that you have more space to learn and move around in.
- make sure all of you know what you need to do next so that you can do better.
- make sure the governors have a better understanding of the school so that they can help the school even more.

We hope you will continue to work hard and be involved in all that the school offers.

Best wishes Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall Lead inspector