

New Siblands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109404
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	337279
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane HMI

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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gillian Foxton
Headteacher	Paul Casson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
School address	Easton Hill Road Thornbury Bristol BS35 2JU
Telephone number	01454 866754
Fax number	01454 866759
Email address	NewSiblandsSpecial.School@southglos.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 14 lessons involving nine teachers and held meetings with pupils, governors and staff. Fifty per cent of the inspection was spent observing learning. In addition, inspectors examined data and records of pupils' achievement, school policies and evidence that the school had prepared to support its self-evaluation. Twenty two parental questionnaires were returned and examined. Staff and pupil questionnaires were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- the capacity of the leadership and management during a period of considerable change for the school.

Information about the school

New Siblands admits pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple difficulties. A number of pupils also have additional needs related to autistic spectrum disorder. Most pupils are from a White British heritage.

From September 2010, the primary department will move to a new site which it will share with a local primary school. The secondary department, including the further education department (sixth form), will remain on the current site. There will be new buildings and the existing buildings will be refurbished into specialist curricular provision.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

New Siblands is a good school which cares well for all its pupils and makes good provision to ensure that pupils are progressing well. The pupils are clearly happy at the school. They say they feel safe. They behave well and are polite and courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. All parents and carers who returned a questionnaire said that they were happy with their child's experience at the school.

Teaching overall is good. Some of it is outstanding. In the best lessons, pupils' enjoyment is high and they respond enthusiastically to the challenges the teacher sets. In all lessons, there is sensitive support from a range of knowledgeable adults but on occasions, too much support is given and opportunities are missed to develop pupils' independent learning.

Senior leaders and managers are knowledgeable and have high expectations for the education and care of pupils. They manage the school well and have brought about many recent improvements, particularly to the curriculum and to partnerships, ensuring that the school has good capacity to improve and is well prepared for the major changes ahead. Managers regularly review provision to ensure that it is of high quality and have a great deal of monitoring information. However, evaluation of the data collected is not always incisive or succinct enough to inform secure judgements and precisely target improvement activities. Governors are very committed and know the school well. Currently, partly because of the large amount of information they receive, they are not sufficiently robust in holding the school to account and determining its strategic direction.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the existing good practice in some lessons to ensure that all teaching supports pupils to develop independence in their learning.
- Refine and simplify arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance to ensure that governors and senior leaders have a clear idea of the strengths and priorities for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From their individual starting points, pupils make good progress in their learning. Pupils leave the school with a range of accreditations from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). Over their time in school they achieve well in literacy, numeracy and communication. Those with speech and language difficulties confidently use signs and

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symbols to express their needs and choices. In individual lessons, pupils consistently take important small steps in their learning. In one lesson, for example, a group of pupils was observed making good progress in their knowledge of simple words, another group made good progress in their knowledge of initial sounds and one pupil made outstanding progress in vocalising.

Pupils are cooperative and enjoy learning. They show concern for each other. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are managed well and records show that their behaviour is improving. The more able pupils have a good awareness of the importance of keeping safe and being healthy. They say that they feel safe at school and know that adults will help them. They communicate the importance of fitness and a diet that contains vegetables. They participate enthusiastically in sport in school and at local events. Those with more significant needs are calm and appear very trusting of the adults who care and give them close personal attention.

From the earliest age, pupils develop good life skills appropriate to their age and ability. Self-care skills are promoted, including dressing and toileting. Pupils have jobs around the classroom, queue for their own lunch and make choices. They become confident in the use of local amenities. Older pupils support younger pupils well. Pupils take part in different enterprise activities, including work experience. They are prepared well for their future placements. An effective school council with a budget to spend, contributing to surveys, participating in local events such as the Thornbury Carnival and arts festival as well as fund-raising are examples of the way in which pupils contribute successfully to the school and wider community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

All teachers plan their lessons in detail. They use a range of resources very effectively to keep pupils engaged, including the interactive whiteboard, objects of reference, and a range of sensory equipment. In classrooms, there is a high degree of enthusiasm and very good relationships. Detailed record-keeping processes ensure that learning is captured. In the best lessons, a lively pace is maintained, tasks are very carefully matched to the needs of individuals, pupils are cued in and then carefully extended through the introduction of new challenges or detailed questioning. In one lesson, for example, pupils' technical language was carefully and successfully developed so that their 'computer lesson' became 'information and communication technology (ICT)' and 'words' became 'text' and 'pictures' became 'images'. In a few lessons progress was only satisfactory. This was because tasks were not challenging enough for some pupils and did not extend their learning sufficiently. In these lessons, the pace was slower and too long was spent with the teacher talking, resulting in some inattention and boredom.

The school has developed its curriculum and standards in classrooms so that there is good coverage of subjects and a continuity of approach through the school. A strong emphasis is placed on developing basic skills, including ICT, as well as many interesting activities including swimming, horse riding, working with artists in residence and using opportunities that the new building has given to exploring materials and aspects of design. Particular approaches for pupils with different needs are integrated well. Signs and symbols are prominent, work stations are provided for pupils who need a particular place to learn and sessions are planned specifically for the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school uses the expertise of visiting professionals well to integrate specific approaches into the curriculum and targets, for example in developing speech and language skills through sessions focused on phonics.

Staff know and care for pupils well. They maintain close contact with parents and carers. They are very responsive to pupils' personal needs. For example, at lunchtime they place themselves strategically so that pupils get individual help with feeding or eating appropriately. In classrooms, care and support are well organised so that toileting and personal care can be carried out with minimal disruption to learning. There are clear and effective procedures for induction and transition. When pupils have additional needs due to their social circumstances (for example as a looked-after child), health needs or behaviour, the schools responds flexibly and effectively.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher who are committed to their pupils' progress and well-being. They have invested a great deal of time and training in building a team where morale is high, with all staff proud to be members of the school. Middle leaders focus on ensuring good provision for vulnerable groups. The practice of developing project teams enables staff to work effectively together and is developing leadership and capacity at many different levels. Policies, plans and procedures are detailed and the school runs efficiently and smoothly.

The school's data collection and monitoring arrangements are very detailed and regular. The views of parents and carers, pupils and staff are sought frequently and assessments of pupils' progress are very precise. However, whole-school evaluation is not always rigorous or challenging enough and leads to some overly positive views. Governors work hard and are visible around the school. They are aware of parents' and carers' views and effectively discharge their statutory duties. However, they do not challenge the school and hold it to account enough.

The school takes a careful approach to safeguarding and ensures that checks, risks assessments and staff training are in place. Clear responsibilities, a recent audit and governors' regular monitoring mean that there is a clear idea of what needs to be done next. All pupils are respected at New Siblands and no group is discriminated against.

The school works well with many partners, including parents and carers. Its growing role in the local partnership of schools has brought clear benefits to the development of the curriculum. Links with other schools also give pupils opportunities to experience a mainstream environment. Multi-agency links are very effective in working with the most vulnerable pupils or those who require specialist intervention. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good, with particular strengths in the way in which pupils are prepared, particularly for their future life locally and internationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Detailed records and assessment show that children are making good progress in all areas of learning and make a good start in school. The safe and exciting environment, including the outdoor space, allows children to explore many different activities and interactive displays. Well-planned outings and short group or individual sessions mean that the curriculum has good coverage of different areas of learning and is varied and interesting. Sensitive and thoughtful adults care for the children well. If a child becomes distressed, staff are very responsive. If a child, because of their particular needs, finds it difficult to choose or move between activities they are gently supported and challenged so that new learning can take place. There are good links with parents and carers, including a very accessible entry profile so that links can be made for the child between home and school. The teacher in charge is knowledgeable and manages the provision well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Recent work with a partnership of local secondary schools has allowed the further education department to develop its curriculum, strengthening the work-related and vocational elements. This new diploma gives students opportunities to become more

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independent and allows them to practise and develop their basic skills in real-life and meaningful situations. They also learn many important skills that they can then develop further in their next placement. Teaching is good and leads to good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, with effective questioning, good pace and appropriate groupings, engage students well. While support assistants are deployed appropriately, on some occasions opportunities are missed to encourage students to learn independently and they are given too much support. Arrangements for transition are very helpful, involving the students, parent/carers and other agencies. When they leave, students go to a number of different establishments where they are successful.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Twenty two parents and carers returned questionnaires and the overwhelming majority were positive about all aspects of the school. A number made additional and positive comments praising the school and the staff. Where there were individual concerns these have been addressed by the report or were explored with the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at New Siblands School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	77	4	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	59	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	59	7	32	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	50	9	41	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	68	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	50	8	36	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	59	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	32	8	36	2	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	64	6	27	2	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	41	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	27	13	59	0	0	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	10	46	10	46	0	0	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	59	8	36	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



07 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of New Siblands School, Thornbury, BS35 2JU

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thought that you were all very polite and we were impressed by your good behaviour.

These are some of the things that we found out about your school.

- New Siblands is a good school.
- You are learning well and making good progress.
- Teaching is good, and sometimes it is even better than this.
- You are cared for well by all the adults.
- You know a lot about keeping safe and being healthy.
- You are being prepared well for your future.
- Paul, Margaret and the other adults manage the school well.

To make your school even better, we have asked Paul and the teachers to:

- make sure that you have the chance to work by yourself to let you practise being independent in lessons
- make sure that they always check that the school is the very best it can be.

We really enjoyed seeing your hard work at New Siblands. Keep it up! We hope you enjoy your new buildings when you move to them.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane

Her Majesty's Inspector

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