

Penrose School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123942
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340455
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
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	51
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Woodason
Headteacher	Liz Hayward
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2007
School address	Albert Street Bridgwater TA6 7ET
Telephone number	01278 423660
Fax number	01278 431075
Email address	sch.602@educ.somerset.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

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight lessons, seeing teaching for all age groups. Meetings were held with staff and five governors. The inspectors looked at a range of school policies and procedures, data on pupils' achievements and examples of pupils' work, and considered the 21 parental questionnaires they received.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of leadership and management on improving the achievements of pupils and developing the quality of provision
- how links with parents, carers and other agencies are being used to improve the outcomes for pupils
- the quality of the systems used to track pupils' progress and how well the information thus gained is being used to develop the provision.

Information about the school

Penrose caters for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some also have autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils have significant life-threatening illnesses, illustrated by the fact that four pupils passed away within the last twelve months. Only rarely does the school have children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and currently there is only one pupil at this stage. The headteacher is now in her second year in post and a new deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the present academic year. The school is due to move to a new, purpose-built site shared with a mainstream school in the near future.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Penrose provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Key strengths undoubtedly lie in the high quality support it provides for pupils' care and well-being. It is because of this support that pupils feel safe and happy in school. Pupils themselves contribute greatly to the very pleasant environment around the school. They enjoy the company of staff and each other, the more physically able often spontaneously pushing wheelchairs or holding the hands of others to include them in activities such as the early morning 'wake and shake' sessions.

While acknowledging these positive care qualities of the school, following her appointment the headteacher quickly realised that much needed to be done to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Despite some considerable barriers to progress, including the inadequate space available in many of the classrooms, clearly much has been achieved. Both staff and almost all parents and carers fully appreciate the significant improvements made as a result of the drive and ambition of the headteacher. She is now very well supported by a strong senior leadership team and board of governors, all with the same high aspirations for the school. Critical in this improvement process has been a realistic self-evaluation of the school's previous performance. The significant improvements made so far, and the obvious change of culture in the school from one of a purely care-based environment to a learning environment, illustrate that the school has a good capacity to sustain its improvement.

Data are now available on pupils' achievements, showing that almost all pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Many are making good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress of the different groups of pupils within the school, although a few individual pupils have been identified as making limited progress and interventions are now being put in place to address this. Improvement targets are set for each pupil but the school acknowledges that it is still at an early stage of using these effectively to plan individual programmes to maximise each pupil's learning potential.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory because of the positive impact it has on pupils' enjoyment of school and participation in a wide range of activities. Resources are well thought-out to make each classroom an interesting and simulating environment.

Teaching assistants usually play a positive supporting role, getting the balance right in assisting pupils yet encouraging them to be as independent as possible. Teachers, though, are not consistent in the way they plan their lessons, often making insufficient use of what assessment information tells them about what pupils know and can do. The curriculum offered has an appropriate range of subjects and includes a lot of positive activities and experiences, including a well-developed horticultural programme. A detailed plan has been produced to show how aspects of English will be covered as

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pupils move through the school, but there is limited documentation to show what pupils will experience in other subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by making more effective use of assessment information to plan lessons.
- Improve the achievements of pupils by ensuring that their individual learning targets are better linked to improving their learning and progress.
- Improve the quality of planning for each subject to ensure that all pupils have access to a structured programme of experiences.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

From very low starting points almost all pupils make at least satisfactory progress. For many this means they become more independent and less reliant on staff support. Previous weaknesses in collecting data on pupils' achievements are being rectified and there is now a good range of more reliable data on achievement. Data indicate that pupils with different special educational needs in the school, those who have free school meals and those in the care of the local authority make similar rates of progress.

In lessons pupils often enjoy the activities and are keen to try whatever it is they might be asked to do. For example, older pupils in a cookery lesson enjoyed completing the targets set for them to cut and prepare vegetables to contribute to making a pasta bake. Similarly the youngest pupils in school enjoyed playing with sand and water and the wind effect from a fan to help them understand a poem about a day at the seaside. However, at times it is not always clear what teachers expect pupils to learn in the lesson and tasks and activities do not build on their previous achievements.

Most pupils show by their above average attendance how much they like being in school. Medical reasons understandably affect overall attendance figures. Pupils show by their relaxed and happy state of mind that they feel safe in school. A group of students identified as pupil advocates because of their ability to communicate is beginning to make a positive contribution to school matters. For example, a new water feature has been created following pupil comments. Pupils behave well, especially at particularly difficult times such as mealtimes and whole-school assemblies. Many show they understand that drinking water is good for them but do need staff support to avoid being in the sun too long at playtimes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the activities in the school. Assemblies give pupils the chance to pray together and celebrate the successes of the others. Breaktimes and outside clubs give pupils good social opportunities to explore different play activities together. Pupils' responses to other pupils and staff show the respect they have for each other.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Evidence from the school's lesson observations over the past year shows that the quality of teaching is improving and observations during the inspection support this view.

Teachers use relevant practical strategies to involve all pupils. For example, in a good religious education lesson for older pupils, music, information and communication technology and articles to see and touch were used well to involve all pupils. Similarly in a lesson for the Year 5 and 6 pupils, a good selection of different torches enabled pupils to explore how artificial light is generated.

Teachers are good at encouraging pupils to try new activities, supporting the school's aim of allowing pupils to take controlled risks. This was evident in a 'wake and shake' session when pupils willingly tried different movements when encouraged by staff to do so. Although teachers plan activities for each lesson they are not always sufficiently well linked to what pupils have achieved previously. Similarly, although pupils have targets, the achievement of these targets does not always represent learning and progress.

Much is being done to improve the quality of the curriculum, including changing its structure to make it more relevant for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A strong emphasis is placed on giving pupils inclusion opportunities but the detail of what pupils will cover in each subject is limited.

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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All pupils receive good individual attention for their personal needs, including their intimate care requirements. The school works closely with the local children with disabilities team to support vulnerable pupils and minimise any shortcomings in the provision outside school for these pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has successfully developed a staff team who all share the same high aspirations for improving the school's effectiveness. Good systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning have been established and the school development plan shows how the school aims to improve further. These developments have been backed up by good training opportunities for staff, including giving teachers the chance to visit other schools where teaching has been judged to be outstanding.

Much has been done to include parents and carers in the development of the school. There are now termly progress meetings and regular coffee mornings, and a parental forum has been set up to give parents and carers opportunities to express their views to staff. In a similar manner, better communication has led to improved links with other specialists. For example, medical clinics are now being held on site, thus reducing education time previously lost through pupils having to travel to attend them. Links with other schools are also good, with the school being an active member of the Bridgwater Education Trust.

Governors have developed their role well. They now challenge the senior staff and are fully involved in the school's development. They also play their part in ensuring that safeguarding is given a high priority, with their nominated governor making a weekly visit to the school and safeguarding being a regular agenda item at their meetings.

Much has been done to ensure that all pupils are included in activities and no form of discrimination is evident. Community cohesion is strongly promoted by many activities, including a link with pupils from a school in Birmingham, who recently camped in the grounds. However, plans to increase pupils' understanding and experience of those from different religions, ethnic and social economic backgrounds are not yet sufficiently detailed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children who join the school at the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with a satisfactory start to their education. These children are appropriately educated alongside those in Years 1 and 2. Careful planning ensures that good use is made of the environment to create a space where there are interesting learning experiences. Children enjoy being there and have very positive relationships with all the staff. Staff use the time well to create a profile of the children to help gain an understanding of specific needs and how best the children learn. Evidence shows that the few children of this age who have attended the school recently have made at least satisfactory progress. This includes their physical development, despite the very limited outside play area specifically for this age group.

The provision is managed satisfactorily by a teacher, who, although not a specialist in this area, has been provided with suitable training to develop his expertise. Good plans exist for making links with a mainstream nursery and planning for the move to a new site includes developing this provision further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Sixth form

Post-16 students enjoy a wide range of activities and benefit greatly from very positive relationships with the staff. The site restricts the opportunities for the sixth form to separate its provision fully from the main school but staff go to great lengths to ensure that age-appropriate experiences are available. These include work placements and mini-enterprise projects such as car washing. The curriculum is currently being extended to provide increased opportunities for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties with greater opportunities to make progress rather than just experience different activities. Data on students' achievements indicate that they achieve at a similar, satisfactory level to pupils in the main school.

The provision is currently managed satisfactorily and there are some exciting and innovative plans to develop it further. Interesting, innovative projects include the purchase of an automated teller machine to help pupils manage their money in 'The Bank of Penrose' and extend their life skills.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it has had on their children. 'We truly would never have believed our child could achieve some of the things that has been achieved at Penrose,' is how one set of parents praised the work of the school. Negative comments from a very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about a number of aspects, including the increased emphasis being placed on learning in the school. The inspection team found no evidence to support any of the concerns expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Penrose 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	71	5	24	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	71	5	24	0	0	1	5
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)	12	57	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	76	4	19	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	57	7	33	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	52	9	43	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	62	6	29	1	5	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	81	3	14	1	5	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



30 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penrose School, BridgwaterTA7ET

Thank you so much for being so helpful when I came to your school recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you all and a special 'thank you' to those of you who cooked the pasta bake for me.

I think your school does a lot of good things but overall I have said it is satisfactory. I can see you enjoy being in school and that all the staff work very hard to help you. You do especially well in helping each other. Staff communicate very well with your parents and carers and involve them in helping you. I can see there are lots of activities you all enjoy taking part in.

The school is very well led by your headteacher. She has developed a staff team who are all keen to make your school as good as possible.

To help it be even better I have made three suggestions to the school:

- teachers should use what they know about you more in planning the lessons
- staff should to give you targets that help you make progress with your learning
- teachers should improve how they plan all the subjects you follow.

Keep working hard and doing your best to help the school.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett

Lead Inspector

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