

# Gibside School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131213
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	341108
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alastair Younger

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Michelle Chapman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jane Higgin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Burnthouse Lane Whickham Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE16 5AT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. Discussions were held with staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Opportunities were taken to talk informally with pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including that relating to the safeguarding of pupils and school improvement. Forty-four parents' and carers' questionnaires were scrutinised alongside 42 completed by pupils or their advocates. No staff questionnaires were returned, but account was taken of views expressed in a recent internal survey.

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

- how well communication is promoted across the school
- the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, especially the highest and lowest attainers
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the widely differing needs of pupils, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with autistic spectrum conditions.

## Information about the school

This is a school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum conditions. Pupils are drawn from the whole of Gateshead. A well above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils are White British. Almost twice as many boys attend than girls and the school caters for a very small minority of looked after children.

The school has received the International School's Award, Artsmark Gold, Teaching Learning Academy Centre, Inclusion Award, Sing up silver, Basic Skills, Healthy Schools, the Activemark and an award for encouraging the professional development of teaching assistants.

**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

This is a good and improving school. It does many important things exceptionally well. Pupils and their parents and carers are very happy with their experience of school. The school's engagement with parents and carers is very effective. Several parents and carers expressed particular appreciation of the headteacher's contribution to the warmth and friendliness that is so clearly evident throughout the school.

Outstanding attention is paid to ensuring that pupils feel safe. This includes excellent attention to their care, guidance and support. Pupils are strongly encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and respond very well. All pupils contribute whatever they can to ensuring that the community of the school is harmonious and settled at all times. They are also extremely highly thought of in the local community because of their enjoyment of school and good behaviour. Excellent measures have been taken to ensure that pupils develop a strong awareness of the community beyond the school, including extensive links with similar schools in different parts of the country and also abroad. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely well promoted.

Good teaching leads to pupils learning well and making good progress. Teachers promote communication skills particularly well, making skilled use of technology as well as by signing and the use of picture aids. The planning of lessons is thorough, but on occasion the tasks pupils are set are not linked to learning expectations with sufficient precision. The curriculum is good and is developing rapidly. The school recognises that several new initiatives have yet to become fully embedded and that not all parts of the school day are used equally effectively.

There have been significant improvements since the last inspection and all issues identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed. School leaders have an accurate perception of existing strengths and weaknesses based on thorough self-evaluation. The school is keen to improve still further, although it recognises that the many new initiatives in place need to become fully embedded. Overall, the school clearly demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching and learning by:
  - following the example set in the best lessons, where precise learning objectives are identified and tasks closely matched to these to help all pupils achieve success and build on prior learning and stages of development.
- Strengthen the curriculum by:

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- ensuring that all parts of the school day are used equally effectively to promote opportunities for planned learning and personal development.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils perform well in lessons; they are enthusiastic learners, behave well and concentrate hard. Even when physical tasks are demanding, pupils try their best, for instance, when using scissors or other equipment, such as kitchen utensils. Pupils listen attentively to instructions and try their best to follow them with as much independence as possible. Pupils show great determination to be involved in lessons, even when they find it hard to express their views, answer questions and join in with discussions. They help each other to learn by not letting personal difficulties interfere with the learning of others.

Many pupils join the school at the very earliest stages of learning and development. For a few, this means their responses are limited to reacting to simple stimuli, such as sources of sound and light. For others, autistic spectrum conditions result in a high degree of interpersonal and communication difficulties. Irrespective of their starting points, all pupils make good progress and achieve well, especially in acquiring the ability to communicate more effectively. The acquisition of this skill is the single most important factor contributing to their future economic well-being.

When account is taken of the repeated health-related absence of a tiny minority of pupils, attendance is only marginally below national expectations. Furthermore, excellent initiatives to support full attendance are proving effective and attendance is rising rapidly.

Pupils feel safe because they know that adults will take great care to protect them. Many have difficulty communicating this for themselves but the views of staff, parents, carers and pupil advocates strongly support the judgement. The desire of pupils to live healthily is amply demonstrated at playtimes where those pupils with independent mobility are regularly seen to be thoroughly enjoying exercise for the sake of exercise, running energetically around the playground and having fun. Behaviour is good. All serious incidents on record are attributable to the difficulties associated with autistic spectrum conditions. Minor misbehaviour is frequently attributable to high spirits when pupils are not fully aware that their behaviour is getting a little too noisy or silly.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The large majority of lessons are well taught. Teaching is at its best is when teachers take great care to identify exactly what they hope each pupil will learn in a lesson then follow this up with precisely planned tasks, clearly targeted to address the learning objective. At the end of these lessons the teacher is well placed to assess whether each pupil has achieved the set objective. A few otherwise good lessons are weakened when the learning objective is more vaguely stated and do not make explicit the learning expectation nor provide a firm foundation for the assessment of progress. All teachers forge excellent, trusting relationships with pupils, which contribute enormously to their care, guidance and support and to their personal development. Behaviour is well managed, often with skilled support from carefully deployed classroom assistants. Expert use is made of technological aids to support communication. Many staff are also particularly highly skilled in using other aids to communication such as signing, the use of symbols and pictures and the social use of language such as 'good sitting' or 'good listening' to support the development of attention skills.

The school has recently introduced a more creative curriculum, primarily because of the pupils' positive response to the various themed weeks that it was already providing. The curriculum is carefully tailored to meet the varying needs of pupils. Those with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties have access to a wide range of activities at a sensory and experiential level, often with considerable input from therapists and other specialist staff. Those with the most severe autistic spectrum conditions have access to a curriculum and learning environment particularly well suited to their learning and personal needs. Personal, social and health education is a very strong part of the

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curriculum, featuring prominently in all lessons and activities. Teachers are increasingly identifying ways in which they can promote literacy, numeracy and computer skills in all lessons. They have been particularly successful in doing this in the growing range of enterprise projects, which has developed well since the last inspection. There are periods during the school day when the purpose of activities is less well defined than others. The timetable, for instance dedicates up to half an hour each day for activities defined in some instances as 'quiet time', 'targets', 'reflection' or 'calm time'. The content of these sessions has not been fully monitored or evaluated to show how effectively they contribute to outcomes.

All pupils receive care, guidance and support of the highest quality. Intricate planning involving parents, carers and the many professionals and agencies involved in the care and welfare of children and families contributes enormously to pupils' well-being. Tremendous attention is paid to ensuring that the personal and educational circumstances of each new pupil are fully understood before admission. These arrangements have met with the total approval of parents and carers. The same thoroughness and sensitivity is evident at all subsequent points of transition, including planning for leaving the school. Staff are carefully and sensitively deployed to help those pupils who at any one time are most in need of support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have a clear view of the direction they want the school to move to secure further improvement. The school is well placed to achieve this because leaders and managers have been effective in bringing about change without losing any of the school's long-standing special characteristics. However, school leaders recognise it is too soon to see the full impact of all of its measures. School leadership has the full support of staff, parents, carers and governors. A particular strength of the school is the openness in the way that all parties are regularly consulted about proposed changes and the many quality training opportunities provided.

Excellent attention is paid to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils. The progress of different groups is carefully and accurately monitored and shows no significant or unexplainable differences. Staff, governors, parents and carers all contribute effectively to the workings of a disability equality team. For many years, there has been no evidence of any discriminatory incidents of any type in the school.

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Care is taken to ensure that all pupils are safeguarded. The school is prudently cautious in its self-evaluation, recognising that the unpredictable is ever present. Governors play a full role in ensuring that only suitable adults work in the school and that procedures are regularly monitored and updated.

The school makes an outstanding contribution to promoting community cohesion. It has received the international schools award in recognition of its global links. Excellent action has been taken to compensate for the fact that the community that the school serves is not widely diverse. During the inspection, a group of Year 6 pupils returned from a residential experience in a multicultural city, shared with pupils from another school with a similarly diverse population.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is an integral part of the school and shares its many strengths as well as the areas in need of further improvement. Children make good progress because they are well taught. Children receive specialist help in learning how to communicate their feelings and needs. This helps them develop their independence skills and show signs of progress and development that are significant to the children themselves and to their parents and carers. Many children are highly dependent on adult support, some totally. This limits the extent to which they can direct their own learning and make reasoned choices about how and where they choose to learn. Staff make sure that activities are not over-directed and that when choices are expressed, they are provided for. Children's expression of safety is best exemplified in the confident way they happily put their personal safety into the hands of adults, such as when they



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enthusiastically enter the hydrotherapy pool. Children are fully included in all of the school's activities and events. Appropriately high levels of staffing ensure that all pupils are very well cared for, guided and supported. Children are well taught by staff who are quick to recognise and record the frequently tiny steps by which children make progress. Leadership and management are good. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is currently refining procedures for the monitoring of children's progress and seeking ways to moderate its findings.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

**Views of parents and carers**

The response to a questionnaire sent out before the inspection was wholeheartedly positive. Parents and carers strongly agree that: the school keeps their children safe; they are happy with their children's experience of school and that they feel the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree these are areas of strength. Many parents and carers went to great length to express in writing their thanks for the way the school has changed their own and their children's lives.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gibside 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	80	8	18	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	93	3	7	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	82	6	13	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	82	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	78	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	80	7	16	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)	31	69	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	87	4	9	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	73	6	13	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	82	7	16	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	89	5	11	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	89	5	11	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



20 June 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for helping us when we inspected your school.

Gibside is a good school; it does some things amazingly well.

You work very hard and behave well so you make good progress.

The way staff help you to make yourselves understood is special.

You are safe and happy in school.

You have good teachers.

It looks as if the school is going to keep getting better.

Just to help, we want teachers to make it clearer what they expect you to learn in each lesson and to make sure that time is always well used.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alastair Younger

Lead Inspector

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