

Three Ways School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135069
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	341608
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Gerrish
Headteacher	Julie Dyer
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Twenty-three lessons were observed. Inspectors talked with parents and held meetings with governors and staff. They observed the school's work, looked at evidence of pupils' work, and scrutinised the assessment information the school has collected on pupils' progress. Forty-four parental questionnaires were returned and examined by the inspection team along with staff and pupil questionnaires.

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 extent to which teaching, assessment, the curriculum and care, guidance and support are personalised to the needs of individuals and different groups
- how well leaders and managers have secured the amalgamation of the three schools and developed appropriate plans to drive outcomes and the quality of the provision further.

Information about the school

Since September 2007, Three Ways has been located in purpose-built accommodation on a new site. Prior to this, it was on three sites, and before amalgamation in 2005 was three separate schools. It is a generic special school and pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. A large majority of pupils have complex needs that include learning difficulties, ranging from moderate to profound and multiple learning difficulties, with additional needs relating to autistic spectrum disorders, sensory or physical disabilities. Three Ways is a specialist school for sensory and physical needs. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Class One. The sixth form has increased its roll considerably since the last inspection, when it contained only one student.

The very large majority of pupils come from Bath and North East Somerset, with a few from neighbouring authorities. Bath Opportunity Pre-school is on the site of the school, but is managed separately and was not part of this inspection.

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

Three Ways is a good school. It has some outstanding features. It has become a school where everyone is valued and where there is a continual drive to improve and to innovate to achieve the best for all its pupils.

Over their time at Three Ways, pupils make good progress in their learning. Outstanding care, guidance and support mean that barriers to learning for pupils, even those with the most complex special needs and/or disabilities, are systematically tackled by knowledgeable, reflective and kind staff. The curriculum gives good opportunities to develop basic skills and is greatly enriched by a wide variety of additional activities and specialist staff skills.

Pupils feel very safe. The behaviour of pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. This is clearly evident in this harmonious community where pupils with significantly different interests, abilities and needs learn and play together very well. Whatever their age or starting point, pupils develop the skills needed for adult life well. This is apparent in the destinations pupils eventually go to when they leave. It is also evident in the development of important skills such as cooperation for pupils with autism, basic money skills for pupils with learning difficulties as well using public transport, responsiveness to being cared for or caring for oneself, and understanding the benefits of doing a good job.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in some respects but the quality is inconsistent. The school has worked hard to establish accurate information and data on the attainment of each pupil. This information is not being used consistently well to inform lesson planning and activities. The quality of questioning and assessment during lessons is variable. Therefore, the learning of pupils in individual lessons is uneven. The school recognises that it has not yet ensured that the many exciting activities and specialist techniques that are on offer are embedded in day to day teaching so that it is consistently interesting, stimulating and matched to the learning styles of each pupil.

One of the major reasons why Three Ways has been so successful in its amalgamation is that the work of the senior management team, ably led by the headteacher, is of high quality. It has built the structures, firm foundations and a strong team necessary for ongoing improvement. One of the particular strengths of the senior managers is their confident grasp of what they need to do next. Partnerships with other agencies are outstanding and this means that work with health, social care and educational institutions enhances the care, support and curriculum for pupils very effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve teaching so that by Autumn 2011, it is consistently good or better by:
 - using pupil assessment information to plan lesson objectives, success criteria and activities so that they challenge all pupils to make rapid progress
 - improving the use of questioning to pupils and ongoing assessment in lessons so that activities can be amended or built upon
 - ensuring that day to day teaching makes the best use of interesting and exciting opportunities offered in the curriculum to motivate pupils with different needs through different learning styles.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The school's own data and detailed knowledge of each pupil's development show that all groups of pupils make good progress, and this was confirmed by observations made during the inspection. Pupils are making good progress in acquiring literacy, numeracy and communication skills. They develop resilience and commitment. Pupils leave the school with a range of accreditation and qualifications, including GCSE, entry level and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards.

'I am happy at school, big happy,' wrote one pupil when asked for his comments on Three Ways. This sums up the opinions of the vast majority of pupils, who say they enjoy school. They feel very safe and a large majority of parents and carers strongly agree. This is because pupils trust adults and say they are free from bullying. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles because they actively engage in movement or physical education activities. They have a good understanding of healthy eating, including making appropriate choices at snack times. Where there are concerns, they follow programmes or interventions that promote good improvements. Pupils' self-esteem and emotional health increase during their time at Three Ways. Pupils are thoughtful, very polite, very well mannered and engaging. Even where the behaviour of a few pupils such as those with autism or severe learning difficulties is challenging, there is evidence of excellent improvement. They are learning to take turns, comply with instructions and become more aware of those around them.

Whatever their ability or special educational needs, pupils respond very well to different cultural, artistic and spiritual activities. Recently this has included participation in the Bath Youth Parliament, a sensory exploration of the major religions of the world and visits from their link school in Uganda. Pupils are very caring. Older pupils learn signing so that they can communicate to their peers and learn manual handling techniques in order to effectively manoeuvre the wheelchairs of their friends so that they can be included. These examples of pupils' strong commitment to one another come from a belief in the value of the individual and equality.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In lessons, strong relationships between adults and pupils aid learning. Sensitive support from skilled adults helps pupils to achieve. Pupils are engaged through different activities and good strategies to promote good behaviour and communication. The use of signing and symbols enhances learning for particular groups. In the best lessons, the learning objective is very clear and the progress toward achieving it is carefully monitored. Pupils' understanding is checked and then they are challenged to extend it further. In a minority of lessons observed, the learning objectives and targets were too wide. They were not sufficiently precise to build on pupils' prior knowledge, and activities were then not well enough matched to pupils' needs to promote good learning. Too often, these lessons became question and answer sessions between teachers and the most able, or pupils of different abilities were all given a similar task to complete. One parent said, 'The school goes out of its way, above and beyond what they have to do,' and another said, 'All staff make sure that my child's complete needs are met.' These comments sum up the care, guidance and support at Three Ways. It is underpinned by everyone valuing the whole child with a calm, consistent and caring approach. A well-informed curriculum access team coordinate outstanding multi-agency work, including good work with parents, so that very effective interventions are tailored to individuals' needs. There are many examples of highly effective interventions; for

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

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

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example, mobility programmes bring about improvements to pupils' physical needs, detailed personal support plans lead to improvements in behaviour, and music therapy addresses some of the emotional needs of the pupils. These are all then evaluated to ensure their effectiveness.

The curriculum is systematically monitored to ensure that there is a good coverage of subjects. There is a careful progression of activities through the school that match the age of the pupils. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 4, where an important emphasis is placed on careers, work experience and life skills. All students access some form of work experience and there are strong links with colleges so pupils are ready to transfer at the end of the key stage or go into the school's sixth form. The curriculum for all pupils is supplemented by a wide variety of additional exciting opportunities. One example of the school's innovative work, and a good example of the impact of the school's specialism, is the establishment and development of a sensory studio with a full-time designer to further a multi-sensory approach to learning. The school takes every opportunity to widen its curriculum through engaging in a wide variety of very profitable partnerships that include professional artists, fashion designers and local museums and theatres.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff and all parents told inspectors that the school is well led. The leaders and managers have succeeded in meeting the considerable challenge of bringing together three distinct organisations on to a new site and creating a school where progress is good, morale is high and there is an atmosphere of continual improvement. Senior leaders are united in their determination for the best. They are now supported by a group of middle managers who are beginning to take more responsibility for leading their own areas. The middle managers are putting in place systematic and consistent structures and using detailed data to drive improvement further. Well-informed and committed governors have made a significant contribution to the successful journey the school has made. They have now rightly identified that they have not been sufficiently involved in the monitoring of learning and progress, and are taking good steps to resolve this. Detailed knowledge of individuals ensures that no pupil underachieves, irrespective of disability, age, culture or gender. The school works hard to develop pupils' appreciation of 'community', whether this is the community of Three Ways, of

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Bath, of the United Kingdom or the wider international dimension. It follows rigorously all safeguarding requirements and this area is another example of outstanding partnership work to bring about better outcomes for pupils.

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
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	1
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

Children make good progress in their learning and social development. This is due to good relationships with adults, skilled teaching and a thorough knowledge of the children. A well-planned curriculum ensures all areas of learning are covered. Detailed assessment right from their first arrival means that each child's starting point is correctly identified and then progress is carefully monitored through learning diaries and photographs. Children are engaged in sessions, cooperate well and enjoy learning. Signing is used well to support understanding and behaviour is managed calmly. Care and welfare arrangements are fully in place. There are very good relationships with parents, carers and other professionals. Leaders and managers have a clear idea of what to do next to improve the provision, for example to work with other providers to develop assessment further.

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

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

Very positive relationships between staff and students are a strength of the sixth form. Students feel very safe and supported. The curriculum is focused on the development of life skills, and this matches well to students' individual needs. This means that students make good progress and the vast majority are very successful in moving to suitable placements when they leave. As in the rest of the school, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. In the best lessons, all students are fully engaged as active learners and making good progress. Sometimes, however, whole-class teaching limits the effective match of activities to individual learners. Leadership is good and improving, particularly in the use of data to precisely target interventions to accelerate learning further.

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

All parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire are happy with their children's experience at the school. The overwhelming majority are satisfied with all aspects of provision and their positive comments confirmed this. In the very few cases where an individual concern was raised, inspectors explored the issue, including in one instance examining risk assessments and accident logs. However, the team judged the school's systems and procedures for ensuring safety, behaviour and supporting learning to be effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Three Ways 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	77	9	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	77	9	20	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	66	13	30	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	33	75	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	55	19	43	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	61	17	39	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)	27	61	15	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	77	10	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	61	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	73	11	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	80	9	20	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

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.



4 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Three Ways School, Bath BA2 5RF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were very impressed by the way in which you have all made your new school into a happy place since you moved into your fabulous new building. We enjoyed seeing your hard work and all the exciting things you have been doing. We agreed with your teachers that your sensory studio is becoming an exciting place to learn.

We found out that:

- Three Ways is a good school
- you are making good progress
- your behaviour is outstanding
- adults care for you very well and you feel very safe
- you are prepared very well for becoming an adult
- you are very kind to each other and very thoughtful
- your school is managed well.

To make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to make sure the teaching is always good, in every lesson. You can help by continuing to try your best.

It was a privilege to meet you all

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane

Her Majesty's Inspector

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