

# New Siblands School

Gillingstool, Thornbury, BS35 2EG

**Inspection dates** 3–4 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- New Siblands School provides a good education for its pupils. It is well placed to improve further.
- Teaching is good and has many strengths. Teachers make learning dynamic for pupils and use a number of ways to achieve this, through the use of technology and sensory methods to motivate pupils.
- The purpose-built accommodation is superb and staff use the different areas such as the library, smaller quiet rooms and outside areas to good effect to enliven pupils' learning.
- Pupils' achievements are good. Some older pupils' progress has dipped slightly, but for some, progress is outstanding.
- The relatively new headteacher and senior leadership team work closely with the governing body and have set out a clear vision and identified suitable priorities to make further improvements to the school.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding. Pupils feel safe, enjoy and respond well to their strong community involvement and they have numerous opportunities to share their experiences with their peers from mainstream schools.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are promoted exceptionally well, for example in offering older pupils the opportunity to be involved in an opera with their peers from a mainstream school.
- The sixth form provision is outstanding. Students are well prepared for their future life through experiences which are highly relevant. The sixth form provision provides a mature setting for students and offers a different experience for older students.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into school well and get off to a good start.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The current assessment system is too complex and does not fully capture the progress of some pupils.
- The setting of targets in pupils' workbooks and marking is inconsistent and too hard for pupils to understand.
- Signing by staff is not used consistently enough across the school.
- On occasions, some activities go on too long as teachers sometimes lack confidence to change tasks to better meet the needs of the child.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons, seven of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the team also considered the school's recent parental survey.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of students, as well as 48 responses to a staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- New Siblands School educates pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. An increasing number of pupils have a diagnosis of autism.
- Due to the nature of the severe and complex learning difficulties of pupils, formal examinations are not appropriate.
- There are more boys, with approximately one third of pupils being girls.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is below average. Three Year 7 pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Since the last inspection, the school has benefited from new accommodation and facilities. The split site educates primary and secondary aged pupils separately. The primary school is co-located with a mainstream primary school.
- The new headteacher took up his post in September 2012 and a new leadership team was formed in October 2012.
- The school does not use any form of alternative provision.

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

- Increase the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and raise pupils' achievement by:
  - using signing more consistently across the school to further promote pupils' communication skills
  - setting child-friendly targets in workbooks and marking work so that children know what they need to do next
  - developing the confidence and discretion of teachers to be more flexible to better meet the diverse needs of all pupils.
  - visiting similar outstanding schools to stimulate further improvement of practice.
- Developing simpler systems for measuring pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of pupils make good progress. The current assessment system used by the school is complex and does not always fully capture the progress that pupils make, particularly of some older pupils. However, assessment information has indicated that progress for some older pupils had dipped. This alerted senior leaders to investigate the reasons why and to put in place measures to improve progress. As a result, the progress of older pupils has improved strongly recently.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation class make good progress. They make small but significant steps of achievement. For example, on entry one child did not vocalise or walk; nearly a year later he was able to take some small steps and say nouns.
- Sixth form students learn a variety of practical skills, to equip them well for when they leave school. They have opportunities for both college courses and work experience placements in local businesses, such as a sandwich shop and garden centre. Students gain accredited awards for the work they have completed. Students enjoy cooking their own meals and learn how to make a bed. The sixth form setting provides an excellent grown-up environment and is a place where students aspire to go.
- The pupil premium funding has enabled some pupils to make improvement in their behaviour. For other pupils, including those eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, it has helped to improve their progress in English and mathematics, so that the rate of their progress has accelerated over a short space of time and their attainment is on a similar level to that of their peers.
- Pupils' reading and literacy skills are developed well. More able pupils read with fluency and are confident to break down words to help them tackle unfamiliar ones. Less able pupils use symbols to help them read text and, where appropriate, pupils use sign language to read simple phrases.
- There are no differences in pupils' progress due to background, gender or ethnicity. Any differences in pupils' progress are due to their individual learning difficulties. All pupils have very clear and specific targets for learning in English and mathematics, on their 'learning mats'. This means that their learning is highly individual and that the level of challenge is just right.
- Where pupils make outstanding progress, this is linked to outstanding teaching, which stretches pupils of all abilities. In one lesson, more able pupils were able to identify complex words such as 'exquisite' and 'beaming' and write interesting sentences. Two less able pupils, who had no English when they recently arrived at school, worked with staff and were learning how to interact and had started to learn some English words.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has many strengths. Staff are very skilled in using technology to make both teaching and pupils' learning stimulating. Pupils are motivated to use portable tablets to play number games or to improve their concentration on tasks. The school is experimenting with eye-gaze technology for those pupils who can only communicate through eye movement.
- Staff are imaginative and use sensory methods exceptionally well to gain pupils' attention. For example, the sensory room is often used to tell stories using lights and sounds. In a jungle-themed lesson, a teacher dressed up as a tiger in order to provoke responses from pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The new purpose built accommodation is superb and greatly enhances teaching and learning. Staff use many different areas of the school intelligently to make learning lively. Lessons may take place in the library, in smaller quieter rooms, or outside, as well as in the classroom. This often means that learning is never dull.
- Pupils are afforded many opportunities to learn on their own. For younger children, this may mean they learn how to make choices using symbols, for other pupils, it may mean working on

more extended pieces of work on a computer.

- The behaviour management of pupils is excellent. This is sensitively done, with respect shown to all pupils and their behaviour improves very well.
- There are some excellent examples of staff using signs to help pupils' understanding and communication skills, but this is not consistently in use across the school. On occasions, activities go on too long as teachers sometimes lack the confidence to change these to better meet the needs of the pupil.
- The setting of targets in pupils' work books and marking of their work using methods such as symbols that pupils can understand is not yet developed well enough across the school.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe, happy and very well looked after. 'Great school, great communication' and 'Fantastic' are typical comments from parents and carers.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They persevere when tasks are hard, but they also thrive on the supportive and encouraging atmosphere and relationships that staff create and this gives them the best opportunity to achieve.
- Pupils behave well in classes and around the school. Playtimes are well organised so that there are plenty of activities for pupils to be involved in and this encourages socialisation and taking turns, for example in riding the bicycles.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to mix with mainstream pupils both on the shared campus and with other pupils in different schools across Thornbury. Special playtimes known as 'Together on Tuesday' and 'Friendly Friday' are opportunities when pupils from New Siblands and the mainstream school mix freely at break times.
- Pupils have excellent community involvement and use the local shops and facilities to support aspects of their learning. As a result, pupils are sociable and are equipped with good communication skills to help them lead as independent a life as is possible, given their needs.
- Pupils enjoy school a great deal and the school council stated that they felt safe and well looked after.
- Pupils' experiences of school are enriched through visits to local churches, sporting opportunities, joint productions with other schools and taking part in local community events.
- Pupils' attendance is average, but where it falls below this, it is due to underlying medical conditions. There are no exclusions. Some pupils have special arrangements and staffing to help them manage their behaviour.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has the confidence of staff, the governing body and parents and carers. He has introduced a number of new practices to improve and develop the school further from its already strong position. Teamworking is excellent and staff are ambitious and keen to help the school succeed as much as possible. As a result, improvements are proceeding rapidly and with vigour.
- The headteacher has established a clear and strong vision, which is widely shared by all staff and governors. The motto of 'Achievement, belonging and celebration' runs through the primary and secondary provision and this has led to high expectations of staff and pupils.
- The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and honestly identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The development plan provides an effective blueprint as to how these improvements are to be achieved.
- The quality of teaching closely matches teachers' pay and the targets they are set. Regular checking of teaching by senior leaders and the local authority has identified strong practice. Where teaching has been weak, this has been tackled. Staff benefit from good training to improve their practice.

- The local authority has confidence in the school and has provided useful advice and support to the headteacher in his first full year of headship.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding has been appropriately spent. It has been used to increase staffing for identified pupils and to increase opportunities, for example to provide additional hydrotherapy sessions for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This funding has helped to improve some pupils' behaviour who have more challenging issues and has enabled staffing to be reduced and pupils to participate in learning more positively.
- The subjects and planning of work taught to pupils are being reviewed and improved to better meet the changing needs of pupils. For example, the school has identified those pupils who have severe communication needs, who would benefit from specific daily input to improve their communication skills. Courses which are meaningful and give them a sense of achievement are being redesigned for older students, to give them more accreditation.
- The school has robust arrangements to make sure that pupils' welfare and safeguarding are secure and that all pupils are afforded opportunities which are suitable for them.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is enthusiastic and sharp. Governors are well informed about the school through their areas of responsibility, which are aligned to the school development plan, through focused visits. They know how the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding is spent, but are less clear about the impact upon pupils and have set out to investigate this more fully. They have tackled weak teaching and have also ensured that the link between teachers' pay and performance is closely matched. They have enough knowledge to understand the school's information on pupils' progress and how it compares with similar schools, but acknowledge that this needs to be simplified. Nevertheless, they have been able to spot a dip in performance of some older pupils and, in conjunction with senior leaders, have taken positive and effective action. They know the strengths and areas for improvement for the school and accurately describe the school as 'good plus'. Governors provide support and challenge in a constructive and supportive manner. They are well trained and have kept themselves up to date with regard to safeguarding, finances and inspection arrangements.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109404
<b>Local authority</b>	South Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401051

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	79
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	9
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Tubb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Buckton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3–4 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01454 866754
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