

# Ratcliffe School

John Nash Drive, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9RZ

**Inspection dates** 25–26 March 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher, alongside other senior leaders, has high expectations of pupils.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that pupils achieve well through careful checks on learning and the quality of teaching.
- Governors have a good range of skills and use their expertise to challenge successfully senior leaders to improve the work of the school.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is well targeted, so that these pupils achieve at least as well as their classmates.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their progress in mathematics and science is particularly good, and increasingly so in English. A good proportion gain GCSE and other qualifications.
- Teaching is typically good and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Activities are well planned so that they meet the needs of individual pupils and ensure they make good progress.
- Most parents are happy with the progress of their children and with the quality of care provided.
- Pupils behave well during lessons and break and lunchtimes. They say that the rare occasions of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by the staff.
- Pupils say they feel safe and there are good arrangements to keep them safe and secure.
- The school provides pupils with a very good range of subjects to encourage pupils' learning. Subjects such as Japanese have provided pupils with added impetus to learn.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their awareness of British values are catered for very effectively through the school's extensive links with schools in other countries.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teachers' marking has improved well, not all teachers are consistent in following the school's policy of ensuring it clearly identifies the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Occasionally, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently to achieve as well as they should.
- A significant majority of staff have raised concerns about communication from senior leaders.
- Some of the showering and bathing provision needs upgrading and food serving arrangements in the girls' accommodation do not promote a domestic environment. Not all care files contained the most up-to-date care plan and risk assessment.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 11 lessons, several of which were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The social care inspector observed evening activities and spoke to staff and pupils.
- There were 10 parent responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and these were considered alongside the school's own survey of parents. A letter and an e-mail from parents were also considered. The inspection team also took account of 46 staff questionnaires.
- 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 pupils.

## Inspection team

Paul Edwards, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joe Skivington

Additional Inspector

David Kidner

Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ratcliffe is a small special school for pupils with interaction, communication and social development needs. A large proportion of pupils have been identified with autistic spectrum condition. An increasing number of pupils enter the school with complex emotional and social difficulties. There are currently 32 pupils who are resident at the school.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is above average. However, the numbers at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 are small.
- Last year, three pupils received the Year 7 catch-up funding, and currently two pupils are in receipt of this additional funding.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none speak English as an additional language.
- A significant proportion of the pupils start at the school at times other than the beginning of the school year.
- Throughout the year, a number of pupils are educated at the following provision: Advantage Point; Exeter College; Bicton College; South Devon College; Hair Academy @ The Deaf Academy; and Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship workshop in Seale Hayne.
- The school is part of the SENTient Trust formed in 2012 and made up of 10 special schools.
- The headteacher became executive headteacher of Oaklands, an adjacent special school, in September 2014.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring:
  - teachers challenge all pupils to achieve as well as they should
  - teachers mark pupils' work consistently in line with the school's policy so that the pupils are always clear about what it is they need to do to improve.
- Improve the clarity of information so that:
  - all staff have a clear understanding of the lines of communication and responsibility between senior leaders and staff, particularly when the headteacher is absent from the school
  - education and care staff work more closely together to improve pupils' education and social development.
- In respect of the residential provision:
  - explore options to improve the serving arrangements for evening meals in the girls' accommodation
  - ensure the bathing and showering facilities are upgraded as part of the school's improvement plan and give consideration to enhancing the 'child friendliness' of the facilities
  - ensure all care files contain the most up-to-date care plan and risk assessment.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have worked effectively to improve the school's work since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement and teaching have improved and pupils are given more opportunities to work independently. The proportion of pupils acquiring nationally recognised qualifications is increasing.
- There has been an improvement in the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through work in other subjects. Middle leaders have been central to this improvement. They have examined teaching and learning to ensure teachers are providing pupils with opportunities to improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Senior leaders ensure that the funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to best effect. There is a clear focus on improving the achievement of these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, these pupils achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders check rigorously on the quality of teaching and learning across the school and they know where its strengths and weaknesses lie. Senior leaders and subject leaders model good practice in their teaching.
- Senior leaders monitor pupils' behaviour effectively. There has been a significant reduction in the use of restraint since the last inspection, an indication that behaviour and its management have improved. The school also monitors closely the progress, behaviour and safety of pupils who are educated at alternative provision.
- There is very good provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are provided with a wide range of subjects that add interest to their learning. A recent visit to the battlefields of France added considerably to their understanding of the First World War. Considerable attention is given to ensuring pupils understand British values through the study of law, individual liberty and the different faiths and beliefs within the community. They gain a good understanding of democracy through voting for representatives to the school council and of issues raised by the council.
- The school has established links with schools outside of the United Kingdom, including in Italy and Finland. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop their writing skills through corresponding to pen pals in the schools. Visitors from a French school recently took part in a range of sporting activities with pupils from the school. These links provide pupils with excellent opportunities to discuss the similarities and differences between different cultures.
- The sport funding is used exceptionally well, providing training for staff in physical education and sport and the employment of outside experts such as sports coaches. There has been a considerable increase in the number of pupils taking part in after-school sports clubs and participating in the inter-school competitions and festivals. The extensive opportunities for pupils to take part in activities, such as kayaking, climbing and abseiling, provide excellent opportunities for them to develop their physical skills, independence and ability to work closely with others.
- The school is working well with other schools in the SENTient Trust. For example, staff are working very closely to develop an assessment strategy that embodies the individual needs of the school but which can be understood by all schools in the partnership.
- There are good links with most parents, who are supportive of the school. Records show that there is no discrimination and that the school does its utmost to ensure all pupils are treated equally.
- Senior leaders hold regular meetings with Year 11 pupils, providing them with good guidance about the choices that lie ahead for them. As a result, almost all move on to further education or gain apprenticeships.
- The questionnaires submitted by staff indicated that, since the headteacher has become the executive headteacher of Oaklands Special School, a significant number are unhappy or unclear about the lines of communication and responsibility between staff and senior leaders. In addition, care staff at the residential part of the school expressed concerns that the relationship between them and educational staff had become strained and that they are not kept fully informed about all aspects of pupils' development. Senior leaders rightly acknowledge there is a need to revisit their guidance issued to staff and to resolve any misconceptions.
- The local authority has provided light touch support for this good school. Senior leaders have brokered additional support to develop the skills of senior leaders.
- Safety checks are undertaken regularly and whole staff training is rigorous. Past incidents have been used by senior leaders to reassess its procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide excellent support and challenge for the school. They have a very clear understanding of how well pupils are achieving, through their incisive analysis of data, and how it compares with other

schools. Governors question senior leaders rigorously about the progress pupils make and how well the school is improving.

- The governors keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and fully understand its impact on pupils' progress. Teachers do not progress along the salary scale unless there has been a clear impact on the pupils' achievement.
- Governors keep a close eye on additional government funding, including that for disadvantaged pupils and the sport premium, and ensure that it is used efficiently.
- They ensure that all of their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, are fully implemented.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils enjoy learning where activities are stimulating and interesting. Occasionally, where teaching is not thoroughly interesting, some pupils lose focus, although they are rarely disruptive.
- Adults manage behaviour well. Staff know the pupils very well and have a clear understanding of what might cause them anxiety or concern. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage pupils and to manage potentially disruptive behaviour. Strategies are tailored to the pupils' disabilities and, consequently, use different responses according to the pupil rather than the 'infringement'.
- Support staff make a significant contribution in enabling pupils to continue with their learning where there are potential problems. Incidents of restraint continue to reduce and there have been no cases of 'ground restraints' being used over the past year.
- The pupils are usually calm and relaxed and they say that they enjoy learning. Pupils say that bullying is unusual and where it does occur it is managed very well by staff. Parents agree, confirming that where they have made contact with the school over issues they have been dealt with quickly and effectively. School records confirm the views of parents and pupils.
- Adults provide a good level of support while providing the pupils with increasing opportunities to improve their independence.
- The behaviour of pupils is good when attending alternative provision which they attend punctually. They have positive attitudes, which are reflected in their regular attendance.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school is addressing concerns raised by some parents regarding the school's perimeter fencing.
- There are good levels of support across the school which keep pupils safe during lessons, breaktime and when undertaking visits. Pupils say they feel safe and their good attendance is testament to how secure they feel.
- Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Evidence shows that pupils understand how to keep safe in different situations. They fully understand how to keep safe when using the internet. Cycling training is a regular feature and provides pupils with a good understanding of how to keep safe on the road.
- Those pupils who are educated at alternative provision are provided with clear instructions on how to keep safe in the different environments. Leaders carry out comprehensive risk assessments before pupils attend any of the alternative provisions and these are regularly reviewed.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching features across the school and there are examples of outstanding practice in all key stages. Teaching has improved because there have been regular and systematic checks and staff have been encouraged to improve their performance.
- Teachers mostly have high expectations of pupils' performance. Consequently, the pupils achieve well. This is especially the case in science and mathematics where pupils, particularly the more able, are consistently presented with challenging activities. These pupils are required to think hard about their responses and rise to the challenges. Very occasionally, teachers accept work from pupils that is not their best, and in these instances pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Teachers work hard to improve pupils' confidence and to develop their speaking skills. Clear questioning by teachers encourages pupils to provide extended answers.

- Increasingly, in English, pupils are provided with more challenging activities and their writing skills are improving well. They are given a greater range of opportunities to write at length in different subjects and teachers are becoming much more demanding of the responses they receive, particularly with regard to pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar.
- Teachers ensure that disadvantaged pupils are challenged as well as other pupils so they achieve as well as them. Support staff make a good contribution to pupils' educational and social development.
- Teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' progress and these are shared with senior staff who challenge the teachers to ensure pupils make better progress. All pupils have a detailed record of their attainment and this information is used effectively by teachers to plan lessons and the next stages of pupils' learning.
- Teachers use phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help those pupils who are struggling with reading to make better progress in this aspect of English. Consequently, more pupils enjoy reading.
- There has been a significant improvement in the teachers' marking of pupils' written work since the previous inspection. There is a clearer identification of how well pupils are achieving and the targets that pupils need to aim for. However, not all teachers are following the guidance sufficiently closely and, consequently, there are missed opportunities to accelerate pupils' progress more quickly.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The attainment of pupils is low because of the pupils' significant learning difficulties. However, the pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. A significant majority of pupils achieve better than pupils in similar schools, particularly in science and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress in how they use their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects, the result of good teaching which encourages this aspect of their work. Effective teaching ensures that a good proportion achieves well and acquires GCSE qualifications in science and mathematics.
- No pupils are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Most pupils acquire functional English and mathematical qualifications. Additional qualifications are gained through attendance at alternative provision and these cover a wide range of vocational courses, such as hairdressing and animal care.
- Pupils make good progress whilst at the alternative provision, which is tailored to their specific needs and providing them with skills for later life.
- Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils achieve well. Younger pupils are provided with a good foundation in phonic skills which give them a good foundation to improve their reading and writing skills.
- More-able pupils make good progress because they are provided with activities that are challenging and which they find interesting. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of girls and boys, apart from those that are linked to cohort differences.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, achieving at least as well as their classmates. This is because funding is well targeted; additional support is provided to individuals and groups, enabling them to catch up and progress alongside other pupils. In all year groups, pupils achieve as well as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education because the additional funding has been effectively distributed to enable more pupils to take part in sporting activities.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are good</b>

- Residential pupils benefit from exceptional quality relationships with staff that put them at the centre of their practice. Pupils have a strong attachment to the residential provision. They make friends, feel safe and are relaxed in their environment. One pupil said, 'Staff keep us safe and we feel safe.'
- From their starting points, residential pupils make excellent progress in developing self-esteem, confidence and self-worth. One pupil said, 'I am proud of my design and technology work.' Residential pupils feel valued and listened to and show respect to their peers and staff.
- Residential pupils benefit from learning new life skills including cooking, shopping, personal care and using public transport. In addition, some pupils attend college and access work experience. These skills prepare them very well for the next stage in their lives. When leaving school, the vast majority of pupils continue with their education and either attend sixth form college or further education.
- The residential provision is well managed and there is good pastoral support. Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy staying at the provision. One residential pupil said, 'It's fun here.' Another said, 'It's awesome and exciting.'
- Staff have an excellent understanding of residential pupils' individual care and support needs and are guided by detailed care and support plans that contain risk assessments, and behavioural support plans. However, not all care files contained the most up-to-date care plan and risk assessment. Equality and diversity issues are positively addressed. There are robust arrangements for the management of medicines. Residential pupils feel very well cared for. One parent said, 'I have no concerns in the quality of care and support provided to my child.'
- Food is of good quality and residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the choice in meals provided. However, the serving arrangement for the evening meal in the girls' accommodation does not fully promote a domestic environment.
- Residential pupils benefit from a wide variety of social, leisure and recreational facilities. One residential pupil said, 'After-school activities are great.' A number of other residential pupils gave 10 out of 10 for how much they enjoy the activities provided, such as swimming, football, computers and trips out.
- All accommodation areas provide a warm, homely and safe environment. Some residential pupils choose not to decorate their bedrooms, but others have personalised their rooms with photos and posters. However, some showering, bathing and toilet facilities require upgrading and are not presented in a child friendly manner. Leaders and managers acknowledge this and have identified this in the school's development plan.

## 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>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113656
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC003895
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	447753

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	82
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	34
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mary Bruton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cherie White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22–23 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 862939
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