

Ratcliffe Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113656
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325853
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

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

Boarding provision	Ratcliffe Special School
Social care URN	SC003895
Social care inspector	Romana Jones

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Mary Bruton
Headteacher	Mrs Cherie White
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
School address	John Nash Drive Dawlish Devon EX7 9RZ
Telephone number	01626 862939
Fax number	01626 888101

Age group	8–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Social Care Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well has the school addressed the points for improvement since the last inspection.
- How well pupils understand how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.
- The boarding provision.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of data about pupils' achievements provided by the school, observation of parts of lessons and the boarding provision, parents/carers' and pupils' questionnaires, discussions with senior leaders, staff, the chair of governors and pupils, and scrutiny of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Ratcliffe's main designation is as a school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and at the time of the inspection these were the main needs of 56% of the pupils on roll. It also has a specialist centre for children with autism and associated needs such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, obsessive compulsion disorder and Asperger's syndrome. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and can join the school at any time throughout the year. When they join the school the vast majority of pupils have not attended school for some time and have had serious disruption to their lives. A high proportion of pupils, approximately 20%, are looked-after children. A significant number have complex learning needs with multi-agency involvement. Around 60% of pupils have a social worker assigned to their families. Through its boarding houses the school provides a 24-hour curriculum with extended day and flexible residential packages. At the time of the inspection all pupils were of White British heritage. The majority of pupils are boys.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ratcliffe provides a good standard of education and care for its pupils, who are prepared well for the next stage in their lives. The work that the school does with other agencies and partners to support the pupils is exceptional. Parents and carers said how much they appreciate what the school has done for them and their children in the communications they had with inspectors.

The vast majority of pupils join the school with levels of knowledge, understanding and attainments that are significantly lower than those expected for their age. Teaching and learning are good overall so that pupils make good progress. In 2008 all pupils passed at least one GCSE; 42% left with one or more A to C grades and 21% with three or more A to C grades. This continues the significant annual improvement, with outstanding progress in science.

In the lessons visited, all teachers had up-to-date records and supporting evidence of what pupils had achieved and their next targets. These were effectively linked to the pupils' individual education and care plans and the National Curriculum. This meant that they could demonstrate that all pupils were making good progress in their learning, and targets were challenging. This is also true for the vast majority of other subject areas in the school. A relative weakness is in the learning of mathematics at Key Stage 4. Here, over the last year some pupils did not make good progress and this is evidenced by the lower than expected GCSE grades attained.

In some lessons, for example in science, pupils had a very clear knowledge of what level of the National Curriculum they were working at and what they needed to do to improve. For most other subject areas, however, pupils' awareness of their level of work and understanding of the next steps in their learning were not as good. The school has already identified this issue, and is currently piloting a system to help ensure greater consistency.

The school listens to what pupils say and has made significant changes to accommodate their wishes, for example by providing a youth club and gardening areas. The school council has its own fund that it uses effectively, and has regular interactions with the governing body. In discussion with inspectors, pupils said they were very proud of their school, enjoyed themselves and felt safe. Attendance is good. The school lunches are very healthy, carefully presented, of great variety and delicious to eat. The one thing that they wanted to change was to be able to stay on past the age of 16. Overwhelmingly the pupils said the best thing about the school was the staff. This is because of the excellent relationships that are formed, based

on trust and mutual respect. Staff have high expectations and provide exceedingly good role models for the pupils, through their dedication and genuine care for them. Although the pupils find managing their behaviour a challenge and often find socialising difficult, they were polite and considerate to the inspectors. On the occasions where behaviour slips, staff manage the situation very well by calmly defusing situations and pre-empting them whenever possible. The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding.

Overall the curriculum is good. However, the range and quality of extra-curricular activities provided for all pupils are outstanding and at no extra cost to families. Pupils have a great deal of choice and influence on what is available. They and their families greatly appreciate the efforts that staff have gone to in order to provide these opportunities.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding, and supported well by the other staff. The senior leaders and governors are fully aware of any relative weakness in the performance of the school. They vigilantly monitor and track all aspects of its work with a passion and concerted drive for continued improvement. They are not complacent and are not prepared to settle for second best for the children and young people in their care. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities. The points for improvement in the last inspection have been met. Through their analysis of their community cohesion policy they had spotted that pupils' understanding of families from other heritages was a relative weakness in otherwise good provision. They have implemented several strategies to tackle this through the curriculum and new partnerships with different types of school, although pupils have yet to benefit from these improvements. Capacity for further improvement is good and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding provision at Ratcliffe School is good. The three recommendations made at the last inspection have been fully met: the outcome of each complaint and details of actions taken are now in the complaints record; the safeguarding procedure is now in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and all staff and governors receive annual training in this; and a regular timetable for staff supervision and appraisals is adhered to.

The promotion of pupils' healthy development is outstanding. The school actively ensures that the pupils' individual health needs are well identified. There are

effective structures in place to ensure that pupils can access the health care services they need. The school is a strong and effective advocate for pupils, identifying unmet needs and securing support. A clear admissions procedure ensures that full information about how to meet pupils' health and other needs is obtained before a child arrives at the school. The medical coordinator and the pupil and family liaison officer establish and maintain excellent communication and links with parents and other agencies, ensuring coordinated support for pupils on a day-to-day basis. There is a strong focus throughout the school on encouraging pupils to eat healthily, be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle. Staff are well trained and able to safely meet pupils' health and intimate care needs. Specialist nurses, such as diabetic and epilepsy nurses, provide specific training. Policies and procedures for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication are in place and are adhered to by staff. Medication recording is very good. The school's outdoor play areas and extensive, well-maintained grounds afford pupils regular opportunities for physical exercise.

Mealtimes are very well managed, orderly, social occasions. Pupils enjoy the food at the school, which is wholesome, well presented and plentiful. Specific dietary needs are well catered for. Some pupils have the opportunity to plan, shop for and prepare their evening meals.

Appropriate systems safeguard pupils' welfare. There is a thorough and detailed approach to the management of risk and to keeping pupils, staff and visitors safe from risk of fire and other hazards. All staff at the school are carefully selected and vetted. Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed every three years, further evidencing the comprehensive protection attained. Pupils report that they feel safe at the school and that their privacy is respected. An appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Pupils stated that incidents of bullying were effectively dealt with. Appropriate steps are taken to protect pupils who are absent without authority. Good written guidance underpins this and pupils are responded to positively on their return.

The school uses a system of rewards and sanctions which are fairly applied and are effective in helping pupils understand and modify their behaviour. Staff are trained in the 'Team Teach' method of physical intervention, which is accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD). Recording and monitoring systems analyse and respond to emerging patterns in individual behaviour.

Residential provision and activities support pupils' individual progress. Information about pupils is shared effectively between education and care staff. Staff teams are very stable and provide very good continuity of care. Staff clearly know about and

understand the needs of the pupils they are caring for. Support for all pupils to enjoy and achieve in their leisure time is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged and supported to participate in a wide range of leisure activities both within school and off site, which they enjoy. Residential accommodation is of a good standard, very clean and generally well maintained. Some areas are scheduled for refurbishment this summer, which will improve the overall standard of accommodation.

There is very good and effective consultation with pupils, both on an individual basis and as a school community, with good links between pupils and the governing body. Pupils and parents value the level of care shown by the school. The positive and effective relationships between staff and pupils, and between home and school, are strengths of the school. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The management and monitoring of care provision are effective. Appropriate staffing levels are maintained. Staff feel well supported in their work and have good access to appropriate training. Governors play an appropriate part in monitoring the quality of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards in mathematics for pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning targets are consistently secure throughout the school.
- Ensure that pupils have greater first-hand awareness about how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ratcliffe Special School, Dawlish, EX7 9RZ

Thank you for the kind welcome that you gave us recently when we inspected your school. We particularly appreciated the discussions that we had with some of you and your parents or carers, and we are grateful to all of you for helping us with our work. We are writing to tell you what we found out during our visit, although you can always read the full report yourselves at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

- Ratcliffe is a good school.
- Staff make a big difference to helping you learn and become responsible young people.
- The school listens to your views in order to make the school even better.
- The range and amount of activities that are available for you to choose from are outstanding.
- The way that the school works with other partners to help you is outstanding.
- Generally you make good progress in your learning because you have good teachers who make the work interesting and at the right level for you.
- Boarding provision is good.

You have such wonderful adults who are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be. We have asked the school to do the following three things.

- Improve the work in mathematics in Key Stage 4.
- Make sure that all of you know your levels and targets in each lesson.
- Make sure that you know more about how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful during the visit. We hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. Wishing you all a happy and successful future.

Steffi Penny (Her Majesty's Inspector)
Romana Jones (Social Care Inspector)
Ken Smith (Social Care Inspector)