

# Longcause Community Special School

Longcause, Plymouth, Plympton, PL7 1JB

**Inspection dates** 21–22 January 2015

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Outstanding          | 1        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Good                 | 2        |
| Early years provision          |                      | Outstanding          | 1        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher and governors have worked hard to make sure that the school rapidly improved since its last inspection. They have ensured that teaching is rarely less than good.
- All pupils, including girls and those supported by additional government funding, make good progress in all subjects.
- In 2014, almost all pupils made good progress especially in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading and writing are taught well in all key stages
- Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained to work together. Pupils' records of progress are robust and accurate.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and extremely well cared for by staff. Their attendance for the last three years is above average.
- The communication skills of pupils with limited verbal skills are rapidly improving. This is because of the effective joint work of teachers and professionals.
- The achievement of pupils in the early years and the 'Oasis Centre' are outstanding.
- Pupils with complex medical needs are making good progress because the school works closely with parents and carers to identify and meet their needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally well managed. Pupils with complex behaviour difficulties are making outstanding progress in their behaviour.
- Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the centre of the school's new 'Longcause Learning for Life' curriculum and underpins all of the school's strengths.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few more able pupils in Key Stage 4 are not making as much progress as they could. The school has not planned sufficiently challenging targets for them in all subjects including English and mathematics.
- They do not have enough opportunities to gain higher qualifications such as GCSEs in more subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 14 parts of lessons. All observations were jointly carried out with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The team visited all classrooms, toured the school’s buildings and discussed the school’s curriculum.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils, listened to them read and observed their behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and staff of the school. They assessed the school’s information on attainment and progress. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body, five other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at the documentation relating to safeguarding, the school’s evaluation of its performance, attendance and behaviour. They also looked at the school’s website and records of local authority reviews.
- Inspectors considered the 72 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View and the views of parents and carers surveyed by the school. They also took account of five written communications from parents and the views of 41 staff that completed the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector  
Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Longcause Community Special School caters for pupils with autism and a range of special education needs such as speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The majority of pupils also have complex medical needs. A significant number of pupils particularly in the primary section are non-verbal.
- About a fifth of pupils are girls.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- About a half of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is above the national average. This additional government funding is for children in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school receives additional funding for sports for pupils in the primary and for 'catch-up' for pupils in Year 7.
- The school maintains a special unit called the 'Oasis Centre' for pupils with very complex special education needs. Currently, six pupils attend the centre. The 'Oasis Centre' is led by a Plymouth leader of education .
- The school devised and introduced a new curriculum '*Learning for Life*' (LLfL) this year to support its Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum.
- The school works collaboratively with professionals from several external agencies, especially the speech and language therapy service, occupational therapists and music therapists.
- All children in the Early Years stage attend full time.
- The school uses a number of vocational providers such as SR Training in Saltash, Cornwall and On Track Education Services, Totnes.
- The school does not use alternative provision for its pupils.

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

- Raise expectations for the more able pupils in Key Stage 4 by ensuring that:
  - more challenging targets are set for them in all subjects including English and mathematics
  - they are given increased opportunities to obtain higher qualifications in more subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors have worked relentlessly to ensure that the school addressed the issues raised in its last inspection. Parents, pupils and staff unanimously agree that the culture and ethos of the school is positive. As a result, pupils' behaviour is outstanding and the quality of their teaching consistently good. School leaders have a strong capacity for continued improvement.
- For example, this year middle leaders have focused on developing a social curriculum. They have trained staff on how to deliver effective lessons. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress. Parents interviewed say this new scheme has had a positive impact on their children's communication and social skills.
- The school has robust systems for carrying out regular checks on the accuracy of its information on pupils' progress. Senior leaders and middle leaders analyse information on pupils' progress in all subjects, especially reading, writing and mathematics and draw up effective future plans. As a result, the planning for development is realistic and based on accurate judgements about the school's performance.
- The headteacher supported by governors has successfully eliminated weak teaching. An effective system for checking the performance of staff and linking it to staff salaries and pupil progress is in place. Good quality teaching is supported by a good programme for the training of staff. This includes excellent training for newly qualified teachers. As a result, all staff are well trained to ensure pupils with autism and behaviour, emotional and social needs make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills. For example, well-planned 'topic' assemblies are used effectively to teach pupils in Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 about different cultures and 'acceptable and unacceptable' behaviours. Consequently, older pupils learn to look after younger pupils well and bullying is rare. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes equal opportunities for all its pupils through an individual approach to their special education needs. Teachers work collaboratively with professionals from a range of agencies to provide individual timetables of support for pupils who need it. This has led to good progress for all pupils, including the few girls.
- Pupils leave in Year 11 with a wide range of qualifications, including vocational qualifications, Entry Level and functional skills certificates. The school is aware that more able pupils can be challenged further through GCSEs and more challenging targets in English and mathematics. The school offers good advice to pupils and their families on future options. As a result, no pupils who left the school in the last three years are not in education, training or apprenticeship.
- School leaders ensure that any additional funding the school gets is managed well. The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding and shares information, on its website, on how the funding is allocated. In the last year, the school spent a major part of the funds on training of staff, additional speech and language therapy and specialist sensory integration sessions. Consequently, pupils eligible for free school meals made often progress similar to, or better than, that of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's sport funding is used to employ sports coaches and occupation therapists to ensure that primary pupils with complex needs participate regularly in sporting activities and competitions. The school has measured the impact of this funding and knows, for example, that increased sporting activities are linked to the improved social communication skills of the non-verbal pupils in the primary department.
- The Year 7 'Catch-up' funding has supported the development of reading skills for struggling readers in Year 7. The funding was used to purchase learning resources such as books to support learning of reading, especially comprehension.
- The 'Oasis Centre' is exceptionally well led by a Plymouth leader of education. Consequently, the provision and outcomes for pupils with complex needs educated in the 'Oasis Centre' are

exceptional. The school is extending its excellent strategies for working with pupils with very complex needs to other schools in its local area.

- All pupils, except a few more able pupils in Key Stage 4, are achieving as well as they can in all subjects because of the high expectations of school's leaders. Leaders have not ensured that challenging targets are set for the few more able pupils in all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school to address the areas identified in their last inspection report. Consequently, the school's performance has improved rapidly.
- The school takes issues of safeguarding its pupils very seriously. For example, records of staff and visitors to the school are kept electronically and checked every half term by a senior leader and a governor.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has contributed to the good achievement of pupils. They ensure that the school's assessment of itself and future plans are linked carefully to the training of staff and the needs of pupils.
- Governors are well trained and committed. They demand high standards for school staff and hold leaders to account for the performance of pupils. They check the quality of teaching and keep themselves regularly informed through detailed reports from the headteacher.
- Governors ensure that the views of parents and carers are used effectively by the school to review its performance and make changes to its work.
- Governors supervise the school's planned activities and ensure that pupils are learning about the diverse cultures in their school community, which prepares them for life in modern Britain.
- Governors manage the additional funding the school receives very effectively. For example, they check to make sure that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely and making a difference to the performance of the pupils it is provided for.
- Governors have supported the headteacher in building a school where staff feel confident through a robust system for managing the performance of staff. They ensure staff are rewarded for a job well done and weaknesses eliminated.
- The governing body makes sure that the school fulfils all its statutory duties in relation to the safeguarding of children. They check safeguarding arrangements frequently.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Parents, staff and pupils have agreed that since the last inspection, behaviour has rapidly improved. This is because all staff use commonly agreed strategies that pupils know and accept to manage unacceptable behaviour. For example, a set of rules on positive and negative behaviours is on display on walls in every classroom.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to provide a calm and peaceful climate in the classroom where pupils, particularly those who are autistic and have other complex medical needs, can learn well.
- Pupils respond extremely well to adults and demonstrate their keenness to learn all the time. They are taught to help and respect each other and to take responsibility for their behaviour. This has contributed to the rapid progress they are making.
- Pupils develop excellent reasoning and thinking skills. They learn about other cultures and faiths in their 'topic' lessons spread out through the week. They grow in their social and personal skills and are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their education. Displays in classrooms and around the school confirm this.
- Procedures to manage behaviour are robust and followed consistently by all staff. As a result, serious incidents reduced drastically since the last inspection. Pupils with challenging behaviour

make rapid progress towards outstanding behaviour since they have joined the school.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and pupils, as well as staff, confirm this view.
- The school manages the rare incidents of bullying when they happen extremely well. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe on the internet and to report any issues of cyber-bullying to staff. Pupils say that adults are always around to listen to them and so they always feel safe.
- Pupils' attendance has been above average for the last three years. Teachers and other adults make sure that pupils' needs are identified and addressed during planned early morning routines. This helps pupils' self-confidence and enables them to settle well for the day.
- Pupils are taught to take responsibility for their safety. In lessons such as food technology, pupils use utensils such as knives and forks very safely and are commended for their efforts by their teachers.

## The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good in all key stages and outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2 and in the 'Oasis Centre'. As a result, pupils make good progress overall in all subjects, including speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in the 'Oasis Centre' is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained to deal with the extremely challenging behaviours of pupils with complex needs. They use an impressive range of tactile and visual cues to ensure communication and are quick to understand and reduce violent outbursts. Consequently the six pupils attending the centre are making outstanding progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan well together in effective class teams to ensure that all pupils, despite their complex learning and medical needs, make good progress. They are practised at modifying teaching strategies to the needs of pupils because they are well trained. For example, they have built on pupils' rapid improvement in reading to encourage them to write more. As a result, pupils are making good progress in writing from low starting points.
- Teachers know their classes well and develop strong relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide exciting and interesting learning opportunities. This has led to good achievement for most pupils.
- Teachers engage well with parents. They use what they learn from parents and the information they have on pupils to plan activities that match the learning ability of most pupils. For example, the learning of the pupils with complex needs educated in the 'Oasis Centre' is exceptional. They are extremely well prepared to take their next steps in education. School records of these pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics confirm this view.
- Teachers use a variety of effective methods, including photographs and video clips, to accurately record the progress pupils make in lessons. This aspect has rapidly improved since the school's previous inspection. Leaders consequently focus one-to-one and small-group teaching on pupils who are not making enough progress. This has led to the rapid progress in writing and mathematics seen in pupils' books since September 2014.
- The quality of teaching of mathematics is good rather than outstanding. Teachers ensure that pupils learn problem solving skills in subjects such as food technology and science. However, the school has not ensured that equal attention is given to developing pupils' skills in all aspects of mathematics. This has had an impact on the few more able pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Communication skills of pupils who are non-verbal are improving rapidly and they make good progress. This is because of the joint planning between speech and language therapists and teachers. In addition, the school has trained staff in 'signing' and the use of visual cues so the teaching of reading for non-verbal pupils has improved as well.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Pupils throughout the school achieve well from their low starting points as a result of good quality teaching. Some pupils particularly those in Years 1 to 6 and pupils with complex learning and medical needs educated in the 'Oasis Centre' make exceptional progress. Children in the early years also make exceptional progress.
- The few more able 14 to 16 year old pupils are making good progress and obtaining functional skills qualifications in the core subjects of mathematics, English, ICT and science. However, they are not making as much progress as they could. For example, they are not prepared well to obtain GCSEs in more subjects, including mathematics. Progress of pupils has continued to improve rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection. This is because of the good systems in place to check pupils' starting points when they join the school and the strategies used by staff to help them. Pupils' completed work confirms their excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make good progress in social and communication skills in a range of subjects. This is because teachers are focusing well on the skills pupils require for their next steps in education.
- Pupils supported by additional funding make similar or better progress compared to pupils with similar complex needs in the school. Additional funding is used appropriately to ensure that the one-to-one and small-group teaching these pupils get supports their learning well. For example, pupils looked after by the local authority made good progress similar to that of their peers in the school.

**The early years provision is outstanding**

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well led and managed so children make exceptional progress from skills below those for their age when they enter the school. They are exceptionally well taught.
- The school's engagement with parents and carers of children in the early years through the 'family project' is leading to exceptional outcomes. This is because parents are involved in the progress their children are making as soon as they join the school.
- The quality of teaching in early years is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants focus on children's needs and use a multi-sensory approach which matches their abilities to hold children's attention and extend their learning. This leads to outstanding learning.
- Since the last inspection, the leader has ensured that strategies to follow the progress children make is robust and accurate. Schools records confirm the rapid progress children have made towards set goals.
- Children develop communication and language skills through the exciting opportunities provided by the school both indoors and outdoors. Staff help children to rapidly develop self-help skills. As a result, children are well prepared for the movement from early years to Year 1, which is smooth and managed exceptionally well.
- Professionals from external agencies contribute strongly to the learning of children with complex needs. Working jointly with teachers and teaching assistants, they support children to achieve challenging individual targets. As a result, for example, children with attention deficit hyperactive disorder make outstanding progress.
- Children feel safe and secure because adults have high expectations for their behaviour. They are taught exceptionally well through a set of daily routines to follow the school's rules and guidance on behaviour and safety. Consequently, behaviour and safety are outstanding.

## 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> | 113650   |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Plymouth |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 453541   |

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

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Special                          |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community Special                |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–16                             |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                            |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 97                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body               |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Linda Bell                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Anne Thorne                      |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 23–24 January 2013               |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01752336881                      |
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