



*Making the difference*

# Head of Education's Report



## VRANCH HOUSE SCHOOL PROFILE 2015

Pearl Barnes, Head of Education January 2016.

I began teaching over 20 years ago, initially as a Primary school teacher with a specialism in mathematics. I gained my Masters in Special Educational Needs from Plymouth University whilst working at a school for children with severe, multiple and profound learning needs across all age-ranges. I subsequently went on to teach in specialist base provision for children with complex needs and as a consultant within the Local Authority for children experiencing mathematical learning difficulties. I have also worked as a SENCO and Head of Learning Support and as an SEN Consultant and writer. I am a Past President of NASEN, where I worked closely with the Department for Education over national policy.

### 1. What have been the significant changes this year?

- Class changes
- Whole school timetable
- Whole school curriculum
- Whole school trip
- Families' coffee mornings
- Whole School Development Plan
- My Goals

#### 1a Class Changes:

In order to develop a curriculum which is personalised and tailored to the individual needs of the children it was decided to create a class which specialised in PMLD and a further class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Class Two and Class Three swapped classes and Class Three became the focused PMLD class, consisting of children from Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. The classes were supported by staff as follows:

Class 1 – Teacher - Michelle Woodgates, BSc Early Childhood Studies, PGE Early Years, PGCE in Learning Disabilities - Profound, Severe & Complex (Distinction)  
Teaching Assistants:

- Chelsea Armstrong, BTEC Level 3 Childcare, Learning & Development
- Tammy Brown, Level 3 Diploma Children & Young People's Workforce, Level 3 Diploma Teaching Assistant
- Helen House, Level 3 Diploma Children & Young People's Workforce

Class 2 – Teacher - Chloe Bond, B.Ed(Hons), QTS

Teaching Assistants:

- Veronica Lye, LSA Award GQA Level 4
- Sandra Selley, NVQ-Care Level 2-Developmental Care

Class 3 – Teacher - Deborah Down, BA(Hons), PGCE, Diploma in Child Psychology

Teaching Assistants:

- Julie Lobb, Level 3 Diploma Children & Young People's Workforce
- Debbie Prout, LSA Award GQA Level 3



### 1b. Whole School Timetable

The new timetable was embedded which enabled therapists and teaching staff to work side-by-side rather than to take children out of class for their therapy, missing valuable lesson time. Daily sessions consist of five 40 minute sessions. All classes start the day with circle time including registration, a time for sharing their feelings, discussions relating to the weather and an opportunity for sharing news. Each class would then go through the daily timetable by completing the visual timetable for each pupil. Class One and Two provided focused phonics and mathematics groups for children across both classes, combining the children according to their ability.

There is a morning break which consists of a snack time and a valuable time for social interaction. Lunch time is followed by further play opportunities and a whole-school time of Music and Movement through the Active Start session. Whole school assemblies celebrate special achievements as well as to learn about the topic, RE and to see and hear about the news and different cultures of the world. Regular visitors were invited along to assemblies. An afternoon break and snack time was introduced to carry children through to tea time.

### 1c. Whole school curriculum

As both the educational and health needs of pupils vary greatly, there was a need to develop a curriculum which could be differentiated to meet the individual needs of all learners. The Seven Areas of Learning curriculum was developed to be more accessible and flexible and ensure each child progressed in line with their capabilities. The table below shows the national curriculum objectives which are covered by each of the areas of learning. The curriculum enabled a focus of attention to be drawn upon communication and language development and the physical development of pupils, in addition to core subjects of mathematics, Literacy and Science.

The Topics covered each term were:

- Autumn Term: Space
- Spring Term: Growing ~ Plants and People
- Summer Term ~ Knights, Kings and Castles

Each topic provided the opportunity for an integrated curriculum to be delivered, which provided a more meaningful and personalised approach to teaching and learning.



<b>Seven areas of learning / National Curriculum</b>		
Prime areas	Communication and language	Listening and attention Understanding Speaking <i>Foreign language (KS2)</i>
	Physical development	Moving and handling Health and self-care <i>Physical education</i>
	Personal, social and emotional development	Self-confidence and self-awareness Managing feelings and behaviour Making relationships
Specific areas	Literacy	Reading Writing <i>English (Core)</i>
	Mathematics	Numbers Shape, space and measures <i>Mathematics (Core)</i>
	Understanding the world	People and communities The world Technology <i>Science (Core)</i> <i>Computing</i> <i>Geography</i> <i>History</i> <i>Religious Education</i>
	Expressive arts and design	Exploring and using media and materials Being imaginative <i>Art and design</i> <i>Design and technology</i> <i>Music</i>

### 1d. Whole school trip

As part of the whole-school topic of Kings, Knights and Castles, a visit to Powderham Castle was arranged. This was a hugely successful visit and fun for all involved. Class Three also organised a trip to St Edmunds Church ruins on Exe Bridge. There were short local visits to local shops to develop numerical and social skills in the children in a real and meaningful way.

### 1e. Families' Coffee Mornings

Families continued to be invited to quarterly Saturday coffee mornings; this provided invaluable opportunity for parents to exchange information and experiences whilst their children took part in art and craft and other game activities which were organised by staff volunteers.



## 1f. Whole School Development Plan

The Whole School Development Plan focused upon developing writing across the curriculum and across the school, improving the bank of switch operated toys and small equipment, and reinstating the school council, which now meets every term, with representatives from each class and run by Chloe Bond.

## 1g. My Goals

At the beginning of each term, every class provides parents with a copy of their child's 'My Goals', giving targets for each area of learning which are specific and tailored to the individual child. The targets are reviewed and evaluated at the end of each term, and the evaluations form part of the ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. 'My Goal' evaluations are also provided for parents, to enable them to see the progress made in each area of learning throughout the term.

## 2. What have been the successes this year?

There were a number of successes across the year, including:

- Vbranch House continued to welcome a range of students from both Exeter College and Exeter University, studying Health and Social Care and Medicine respectively.
- The Space Dome, which was a giant planetarium, proved very popular and successful
- The Saturday coffee mornings became increasingly successful
- The children participated in a whole-school sports day towards the end of term, which was great fun and enjoyable for all
- Children enjoyed growing different fruits and vegetables
- The Ofsted inspection in July 2015

## 3. How much progress do pupils make?

Pupil progress is measured using P Scales and National Curriculum levels, for pupils of school-age, and the EYFS Early Learning Goals for pupils within the Foundation Stage. Pupils make good progress when their baseline achievements are taken into account. Teachers carry out continuous assessments to ensure that the targets set for the pupil are appropriate and challenging. Termly a full assessment of each pupil is determined in partnership with other professionals and based upon the evaluation of each target from the pupil's 'My Goals'.

## 4. How are we making sure that every child receives a teaching approach to meet their individual needs?

The teaching approach is multi-sensory based which includes therapeutic input throughout the day. The planning of teaching activities are based around rigorous assessment which identifies the strengths and needs of pupils and plans to move them on, little by little, towards their targets. This is achieved by:

- Setting termly individual 'My Goals' which are linked to Education Health Care plan/Statement of Special Educational Needs and the annual review, with a focus on personalised learning, individual needs and life skills development.



- A range of assessment which builds upon what children know and can do. At the end of each term, a summation of the pupil's attainment is provided, in P Levels of National Curriculum Levels
- Annual monitoring of pupil progress using Durham data analysis.
- Moderation of individual pupil assessment, including links with mainstream schools for pupils who are on a dual placement.
- Regular weekly meetings across therapy and education staff to ensure children's needs are met.
- Input and support from Specialist Advisory Teachers as necessary.

## 5. What have pupils told us about the school, and what have we done as a result?

Pupils took the opportunity to contribute their ideas through the school council. They told us that they enjoyed growing vegetables and fruit and would like more opportunity to do so. As a result, the greenhouse is frequently used to grow vegetables and fruit outdoors. We are encouraging pupil voice across the whole school community through regular school council meetings.

## 6. How do we make sure our pupils are safe and well supported?

The safety and support of pupils is the highest priority and there are several measures in place to ensure pupils feel safe and cared for at all times. These include:

- The School nurse is on duty at all times.
- There is a high staff to pupil ratio.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to let staff know if they have any worries or concerns.
- There are regular clinics which are held at school, which include: paediatric, orthopaedic, orthoptic, audiology and wheelchair clinics.
- The pupils' diets are closely monitored.
- Healthy snacks are provided at break times.
- There are close links between home, school, through the home-school diary where staff and parents are able to record any information relating to the child.
- There are close links with respite care and transport, mainstream placements where pupils attending another setting other than Vbranch House are able to discuss the pupil and support their learning and progress.
- As therapy staff are colocated within Vbranch House, sharing of information occurs regularly to ensure the best possible support is provided.
- All staff are trained to a high level of Safeguarding.
- All staff receive a high level of training, including: moving and handling and health and safety.
- All school policies are regularly updated in line with best practice
- Liaison with mainstream settings regarding issues such as attainment, moderation and attendance occurs regularly regarding pupils who access mainstream provision.
- There are regular meetings between teachers, support staff and health professionals to raise concerns or issues at the earliest opportunity.
- The school has an 'Open Door' policy.
- There is a Staff Governor who provides an easily accessible link between staff and management. The Staff Governor represents the views of staff at support and governor's meetings.





- Closed circuit security cameras outside the building.
- Secure boundaries around school.
- All students and volunteers are provided with an induction pack to ensure they are aware of the policies and protocols across the school.
- Regular fire drills.
- High levels of investment in buildings and equipment and regular maintenance.

## 7. How do our absence rates compare with other schools?

There were 24 pupils on role with a full-time equivalent of 17. The total authorised absence for the year 17.51 per cent. There were 0.15 per cent unauthorised absence. The level of absence is relatively high due to the nature of the needs of pupils requiring regular respite care and hospital visits.

## 8. What activities are available to pupils?

All pupils are given access to a broad and balanced curriculum which is appropriate to their individual needs.

Some children are able to access music therapy through a specialist trained music therapist.

All children have access to the hydrotherapy pool supported through a physiotherapist.

All children have access to the multisensory room and an integrated curriculum which involves a high level of multisensory activity.

Children with a range of communication levels are provided with communication devices according to their individual levels of capability, including access to:

- Eye gaze
- Signs and symbols
- Objects of reference

There is an outdoor multisensory nature trail for all pupils to access.

There is a high level of ICT equipment which enables pupils to learn ICT proficiency in addition to using ICT as a tool to access learning.

All pupils are able to access the Play room at various opportunities throughout the day.

Pupils receive a holistic education which is appropriate to their needs.

A high level of therapy intervention is provided and support staff have a high level of expertise in therapeutic intervention.

## 9. How are the emotional needs of pupils supported?

For some pupils it is entirely appropriate that they are offered the opportunity to share their educational provision with a mainstream setting. This opportunity enables them to booster their self-esteem whilst learning alongside their peers. It enables equality of opportunity as it recognises the individual differences of children.



Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible and independent skills are a part of the daily timetable.

Pupils are given appropriate praise to encourage their esteem and further praise is given through certificates which bolster the pupils learning and engagement.

Pupils are given opportunity to talk with staff and access PSHE as part of the curriculum.

The daily whole-school Active Start provides pupils with fulfilment and enjoyment through singing and movement, bringing the school together and having fun whilst exercising and singing.

Children are regularly encouraged to make choices and take a full part in the learning opportunities.

Collaboration with mainstream partners ensures pupils have a consistency of care and support.

Groupings will vary according to their individual capabilities and ensure pupils are fulfilled and stretched in their learning and achievement, offering a boost to their sense of achievement.

All staff use Makaton to ensure pupils are able to communicate their needs and wants effectively.

## **10. How would we describe our teaching approach and how the curriculum is adapted for pupils?**

The approach to teaching and learning is child-centred based around the needs of the child. Information from rigorous and detailed assessment of the child's strengths and areas to develop provide the baseline for planning and setting targets.

Each class follows the whole-school planning which is theme-based and covers the seven areas of learning, as described. It is tailored specifically to the individual needs of the pupils through a variety of ways.

Class One provides an early learning curriculum which involves free-play activities in addition to directed tasks, such as focused phonics groups. On occasion, Classes One and Two combine to deliver a differentiated curriculum aimed at building upon what the pupils know and can do, through more structured activities. This is mainly focused phonics and literacy groups.

Class Two and Three offers a range of approaches which are sensory and physically based. Time is given to develop pupils' individual targets within the school day through one-to-one sessions and a range of small group sessions.

All classes provide opportunity for regular outdoor play.

## **11. How are we working with parents and the community?**

Working with the community is a high priority for the School and this is accomplished in a number of ways. For instance:

There are a high percentage of parent representatives on the Board of Governors.

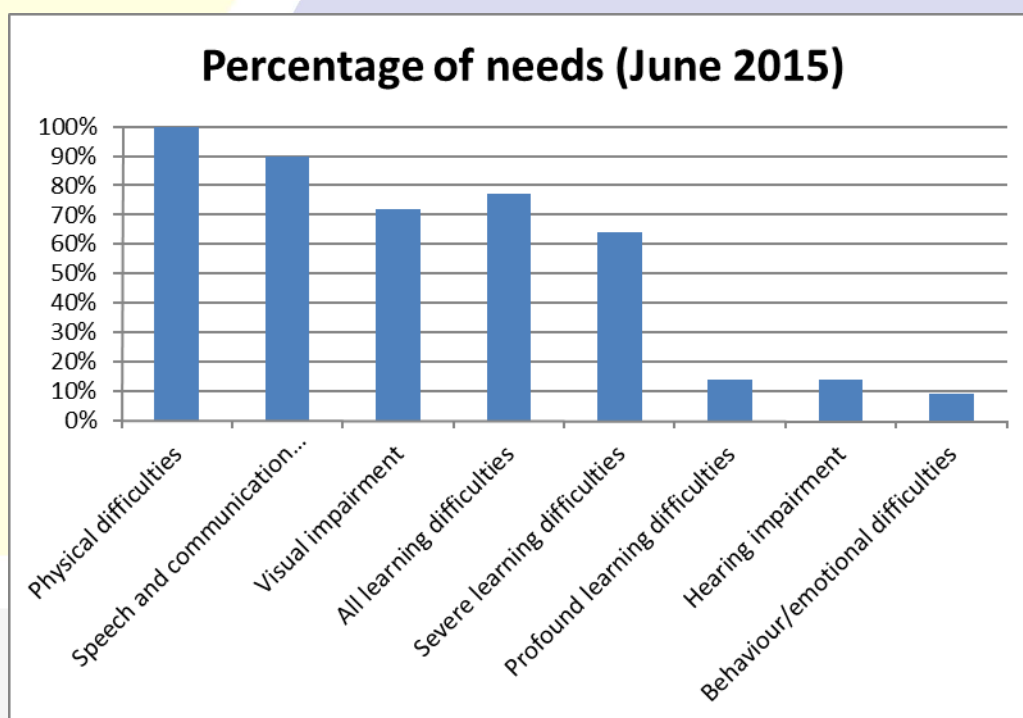




- Therapy sessions are provided during holidays.
- Fundraising activities for charities by the children including Children in Need and Young Epilepsy.
- There is daily communication with parents through diaries and communication aids.
- All parents receive a copy of the 'My Goals' each term and evaluation of My Goals.
- Termly parent support leaflets on how families can support their child's learning at home.
- End of year Achievement Awards and Special Merit Certificates are provided.
- The annual Summer Fayre, Christmas Play, Easter workshop, Harvest supper.
- Student placements from universities and colleges.
- Parents and families are invited to school events e.g. school play and Christmas Carols, Easter Bonnet parade, Achievement Awards assembly, Harvest Festival.
- Families' coffee mornings with a specific focus for sharing information.
- Parents are encouraged to talk to the Head of Education, the class teachers or therapists should they have any queries. Parents are welcome to join in therapy or school sessions.

## 12. What is the range of needs that the School caters for?

The main criteria for admission is a severe physical disability. However, many pupils experience a range of needs, including sensory impairment and severe learning disability. The graph below shows the percentage of need for each category; some pupils may have more than one additional area of need and it is not uncommon for pupils to experience up to four additional needs. The most prevalent combination of need is: physical disability, speech, language and communication needs, visual impairment and severe learning difficulties. A number of pupils are registered severe sight impaired.



### 13. What do our pupils do after leaving this school?

Vranch House offers specialist provision for children aged 2 to 12 years. Children leave School to attend a variety of settings including:

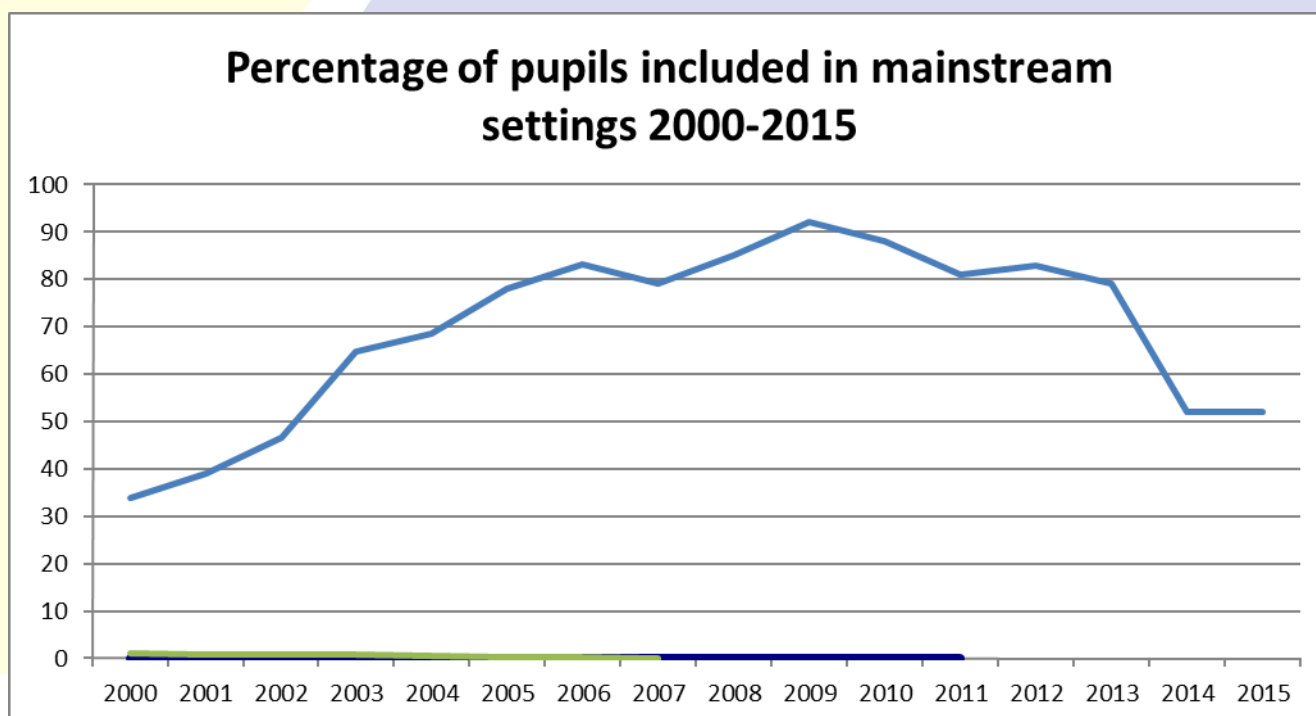
- Mainstream schools
- Other specialist providers
- Mainstream schools with specialist base provision for pupils with specific needs, such as physical disabilities and/or sensory impairment (visual or auditory impairment).

Transition to the Secondary school is very carefully organised to enable the pupils to be settled and happy in their new school.

### 14. How are pupils included into mainstream schools?

When the Education Health Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs is drawn up, a decision is made as to whether there would be an educational or social benefit for pupils to be dual placed; i.e. to spend part of the time at Vranch House and part of the time in a mainstream setting. The placement is dependent upon the needs of the child and is decided on a case-by-case basis.

As the complexity of the needs of pupils has changed in recent years, there has been a decline in the number of pupils who are included within mainstream settings. The graph below shows the changes in inclusion over the last 15 years.



### 15. What were the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection in July 2015?

During the beginning of July, the school underwent an Ofsted Inspection. The Inspection found that the School was Good overall. The Behaviour and Safety of the pupils was Outstanding: 'Classrooms and the playground are peaceful and calm places to learn and socialise.'



The Early Years provision was judged as Outstanding: All children are well prepared academically and emotionally for their move to the primary stage.'

The outcome of the Inspection was that the school needed to further develop:

- Activities which challenge pupils.
- Total communication across the school.
- The promotion of pupil's individual goals consistently throughout the day.

## **16. What can the school do to improve further:**

### **Develop the physical environment to provide an opportunity for a range of approaches:**

Children need a variety of opportunities to develop and learn, including outside. It is the goal to develop the outside area for pupils to be able to access play more readily, alongside somewhere safe and calm to learn.

### **Develop the greater consistency in use of total communication:**

The need to develop pupils' communication skills is a pre-requisite imperative to learning and the focus will be upon working in partnership with speech and language therapists to enable staff to be skilled in communication with pupils who have limited communication and who experience sensory impairments.

### **Develop skills in multisensory curriculum for pupils with a range of multisensory impairment:**

87 per cent of pupils at Vbranch House experience either a visual or multisensory impairment requiring a different approach to teaching and learning. The aim is to skill all staff to be able to support children with a range of sensory needs effectively.

### **Ensure that all staff working with the individual children are aware of their individual needs in order to promote and develop their goals throughout the day:**

This can be achieved by setting up a Pupil Profile and Pupil Passport for each child, which is readily available for staff to refer to.