

# Saxon Mount School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114691
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	357587
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Ellis HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Preece
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Edinburgh Road East Sussex TN38 8HH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They observed 13 lessons taught by 12 teachers, and held discussions with groups of students, staff, parents and carers, representatives from the local authority and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, curriculum plans, the school's tracking data showing students' progress and attainment, teachers' lesson plans, students' work and the displays around the school. In addition, they analysed the questionnaire responses of 40 parents and carers and 36 pupils, and took their views into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by groups of pupils with different special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The use of assessments to plan specific and relevant learning for students in lessons.
- The impact of the school's revised curriculum and specialist provision to meet the needs of the different groups.

## Information about the school

Saxon Mount is a small school providing specialist education for students of secondary school age who have moderate learning difficulties, communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Most students are White British. They come from a wide area of East Sussex, including Rye, Eastbourne and Bexhill, and there are more boys than girls. Almost half the students are entitled to free school meals and a few speak English as an additional language. Almost one in ten of the students are looked after children. The school achieved National Autistic Society Accreditation in July 2010

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

- Saxon Mount is a good school that ensures that students make good progress in their personal and social skills. This means that they are well prepared for life when they leave school.
- The keys to the school's success are good leadership and the hard work and dedication of the staff.
- Students' welfare and well-being underpin the school's work and all staff ensure that students are extremely well looked after. The relationships between staff and students are very good and contribute to students feeling safe and enjoying school.
- Students make good progress because of the good teaching and specialist support that they receive.
- Strong links with parents, carers and other agencies support students both in their learning and in their personal development.
- Behaviour is good and students work and play well together.
- Students know about their own community and international communities, but are less well informed about the different communities found across Britain.
- Leadership and management at all levels are developing, but the school recognises that developing the role of learning leaders is key to future success.
- Although the curriculum is good overall, students do not have enough opportunities to learn about and practise their skills in managing money. Capacity for further improvement is good and demonstrated by the progress made in addressing the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection, for example the good improvements to attendance and in the use of assessment to support learning.

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

- Develop links with other schools to foster students' understanding of and respect for different communities in Britain beyond their own locality.
- Build on improvements to leadership and management at all levels to develop the capacity of learning leaders so that they can play a greater role in driving improvement.
- Strengthen the curriculum so that students have good opportunities to develop appropriate financial and enterprise skills.

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## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

All groups of students make good progress in learning and personal development in lessons. Carefully planned activities, well matched to students' needs, ensure that students make important gains in communication skills and independence, lesson by lesson. Students who have learning difficulties that are more complex communicate their choices and answers using pictures, symbols, and signing. The school's assessment data and students' outcomes in accredited courses show that, from very low starting points, students make good progress in English, mathematics and the other subjects that they study.

Students enjoy school, which is shown by their above-average attendance. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and their behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. Those students who spoke with inspectors say that they feel very safe at school and that there are adults who they trust who will help them with any problems they have. Students participate in a range of activities, including performing arts, dance and sports, which they understand make a very valuable contribution to their physical fitness and personal development. They also know why it is important to eat healthy food. They, willingly, within their capabilities, take on responsibilities, for example as representatives on the school council or by working with local primary schools as sports leaders. Students mix well together and they reflect on their experiences. Several students were keen to continue to discuss a stimulating assembly about the holocaust that had taken place on the day before the inspection.

Although there are opportunities for students to develop an understanding of managing money, economics and business and enterprise, the school recognises that this area of learning is less well developed than other aspects.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and students are supported well by a capable team of teaching assistants. Skilful behaviour management, particularly of students with autism, ensures that students are fully engaged with activities that promote their learning. Most staff use assessment information effectively to identify the next small steps in learning. This ensures that tasks and activities are pitched at the right level for each student. Classrooms have been reorganised so that there are few distractions and students are carefully positioned so that they can focus on their work.

The curriculum is good and there are plans to develop it further, particularly for Key Stage 3 students. Older students have good opportunities to study and achieve accreditation at an appropriate level in an increasingly broad range of subjects. Good links have been established with a local college so that there are clear pathways for students to progress from school to the next stage in their education. Provision for potentially vulnerable students is good and, consequently, there are no significant differences in the rates of progress for the different groups. Teachers often go to great lengths to ensure that the curriculum is personalised by linking activities in class to individual student's personal experiences and interests. A good range of visits and visitors further enriches the

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curriculum. For example, during the inspection a police liaison officer visited the school to work with groups of Year 8 students on the consequences of crime.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. It is a welcoming and safe environment where all students are valued. There are good transition arrangements for students joining the school and for when they leave. There are notable examples of where effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies have helped students overcome personal difficulties and significant barriers to their learning. There are weekly multi-agency meetings to ensure that the social and academic progress of every student is reviewed at appropriate intervals. Staff have received training so that they are better able to support and challenge students who have more complex needs.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management are embedding ambition and driving improvement successfully. The headteacher and other senior leaders are promoting a culture where there are high expectations of what students can achieve, both in lessons and over time. As a result, students achieve well and progress is accelerating. Each of the different groups of students, including looked after children, achieve equally well, reflecting the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what is needed to improve it further. Middle leadership is developing and staff who have additional responsibilities are increasingly empowered and enabled to take responsibility for raising standards and driving improvement. However, this tier of leadership and management is not yet fully effective and the school rightly recognises that this needs to continue to be an area for development. Students are kept safe and the school adopts best practice in all areas of safeguarding. The governing body is effective in holding the school to account and challenging it to improve. Governors visit the school regularly and ensure that their statutory duties are met. Students make good progress in their understanding of local and global communities, but they are less well informed about the wider national community. Practical links with the local community enhance students' independence. For example, most Key Stage 4 students have opportunities to participate in offsite learning experiences at college, local employers or other schools.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors were generally very positive about their children's experiences at the school. A minority felt that their children did not make as much progress as they would like, but inspectors found that students make good progress in relation to their starting points.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saxon Mount School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	48	20	50	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	55	17	43	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	50	18	45	8	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	45	14	34	7	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	58	14	35	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	48	17	43	3	8	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	45	21	53	0	0	1	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	43	21	53	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	48	20	50	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	43	21	53	0	0	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	43	20	50	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	58	16	40	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	60	15	38	0	0	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 January 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Saxon Mount School, St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 8HH**

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school. Our particular thanks to all of you who took time to fill out our questionnaire or to talk to us about your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing how hard you work. We found that yours is a good school. You work hard in lessons and do well in your learning. It was good to see how happy you are in school and you told us you feel safe. The school is very good at making sure you are well cared for and kept safe. We were pleased that you like taking exercise and keeping healthy and it was good to hear about all the different activities you are involved in. Your teachers know you very well and they work hard to make lessons interesting and relevant.

We have asked the school to do some things to make things even better.

- We would like you to learn a bit more about how other people live in different parts of the country.
- We have asked the school to give you even more opportunities to learn about managing your money and help you develop some extra skills that will be useful to you when you leave school.
- All the adults who have special responsibilities are asked to make sure that the school runs smoothly and continues to improve rapidly.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis Her Majesty's Inspector

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