

Starhurst School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125464
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359894
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

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

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Close
Headteacher	John Watson
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
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Boarding provision

Social care Unique Reference Number

SC013883

Social care inspector

Diane Thackrah

Age group 11–16

Inspection dates 10–11 November 2010

Inspection number 359894

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Introduction

This was a joint inspection with a social care inspection of the school's boarding provision. There was one additional inspector and one social care inspector. The additional inspector visited 11 lessons and observed 11 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff and students. Students' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from 1 parent, 27 staff, 24 students and 8 boarders were scrutinised. One telephone conversation was held with a parent.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following.

- The effectiveness of the school's strategies in supporting students to improve their behaviour and attend school regularly.
- How teaching ensures that students know how well they are doing and understand what they have to do to improve.
- How effectively data are used to ensure that all students have equality of opportunity and address areas where improvements are identified.
- The effectiveness of the planning and monitoring of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- How effectively the governing body challenges the school to bring about improvements.

Information about the school

Starhurst is a school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All have statements of special educational needs and nearly all students have additional special needs recognised in their statements. These include autistic spectrum disorders, language and communication difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. A very small minority of students are in the care of the local authority. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.

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

Starhurst is a good school that effectively supports students in improving their social skills and becoming confident young men, well prepared for life when they leave school. It achieves this through an effective range of strategies that are used consistently well by all staff. Students achieve well and make good progress because they enjoy many aspects of school life, talking positively about subjects such as mathematics, history, science and leisure and tourism. The curriculum provides a good range of activities that are valued by the students. This is particularly the case in subjects such as physical education and home economics that enable the students to develop a good understanding of the benefits of healthy living. The students are proud of their work in bringing about change through the school council and they contribute well to the local community in a variety of ways, such as their involvement in Dorking Gala evening. Although many students attend regularly, a very small minority do not and, as a result, attendance is satisfactory rather than good. The school's good partnership with outside agencies and close links with families enable nearly all students to gradually improve the amount of time they spend in school.

Behaviour is good overall. Students talk positively about the impact of the school on their lives and how it has helped them improve their behaviour. They point out that it takes time to adjust to the expectations of staff, and that once the new students settle in their behaviour improves. The school's strategies for supporting behaviour are effective for the vast majority of students and are constantly being reviewed to take into account the widening range of special needs within the school. Relationships between staff and students are strong and enable students to have confidence that any problems they may have will be addressed. As a result they say they feel safe in school. Teaching is good and has many strengths. In many subjects, students understand how they are doing and what they have to do to improve, but this good practice is not well established in all subjects. Effective assessment enables the school to identify those students who need extra support in literacy and this often results in good gains, particularly in spelling. Whilst there are many opportunities for students to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, the school does not have effective systems for checking that this is consistent across the curriculum.

The school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the time of the last inspection and is constantly looking at ways it can improve. The strong senior management team is well supported by enthusiastic middle managers who are developing their roles well. Self-evaluation processes are well established and the school is quick to address any areas of weakness through clear development planning. As a result, the school has good capacity to sustain the progress it is making. The progress of individual students is monitored closely, ensuring that all students have equal access and opportunity to all the school offers. However, the school is at an early stage in analysing the progress of different groups. The governing body is well informed about many aspects of the school but the

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lack of information on the performance of different groups restricts its ability to effectively challenge staff to ensure that all students are making the progress they should.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in all subjects students understand what they need to do to improve.
- Improve monitoring of the curriculum to ensure that students have a range of opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Ensure the governing body has a clear overview of the progress of the different groups within the school in order to provide more effective challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment of students is well below that expected nationally. Many students have additional special needs, over and above their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Despite this, by the time they leave school, a large majority gain accreditation, several gaining GCSEs and all achieving passes in Entry-level accreditation. For many this reflects good progress and does much to boost their self-esteem and confidence. Achievement is particularly good in art and leisure and tourism. Practical subjects are very popular and students produce high quality work in art and design and technology. Many students clearly enjoy home economics and they are proud of the meals they cook. This was evident in a Year 8 lesson in which each student produced a very professional looking meal of sweet and sour chicken and noodles. The students were able to explain the ingredients and were keen to eat at least some of the meal before taking it home! Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well across the school. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students confidently displayed data in a variety of forms. Information gathered by the school shows that all students, including those in the care of the local authority, achieve equally well.

Students talk positively about how well they are doing and clearly appreciate the support they get. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for all the sporting activities in which they are involved, especially football. The school council has been very active in ensuring the sporting facilities are improved, and also in buying items of kit, such as football boots, for those students who may not have any. Students are very clear about the importance of keeping fit and have a good awareness of healthy foods. They are very positive about the quality of the school meals.

Students have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong and, through the effective systems within school, learn to improve their behaviour. A very small number of new students struggle to conform, but all value the school's rewards system and are keen to participate in the activities at the end of each week. Students recognise that there is some bullying in school but they are clear about whom they should go to and are confident that staff will address any issues they may have. The school is active in raising students' understanding of life in different societies. Students have links with a school in Madrid and are supporting a young child in Africa. There are good plans in place to develop students' awareness of life in a multicultural society further. Links with the local community are strong. An example of this is the work being done in working with Thames Young Mariners. Students are clearing ground by the river and building benches and platforms for anglers. The vast majority of students, by the time they leave school, are

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responsible young men who have developed good skills that will support them well in the world of work and college.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

The strong subject knowledge of teachers is very evident in all lessons. In science and history, for example, teachers are able to respond with confidence to students' questions, explaining in science how pure water is made and, in history, how slaves survived the long boat journeys. Teachers use their knowledge well and make good use of ICT to provide different activities for students so that lessons are interesting. The enthusiasm of staff for their subjects is often effective in encouraging reluctant learners to participate gradually, whether in making a decorative textile pattern or joining in a ball game in the gym. Teaching assistants contribute well to students' learning and there is good teamwork between staff in lessons. In subjects such as English in Key Stage 3, design and technology and science, the very good quality feedback to students enables them to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school and not all students are sufficiently well informed about their achievements.

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The curriculum has many strengths and has been adapted well to meet the needs of students. In Years 10 and 11 there is good provision for work experience and college courses and the school is constantly looking at ways to develop this. Links with mainstream schools are providing opportunities for students to attend lessons for example in Spanish at a local school. The need to extend the use of ICT across the curriculum was identified in the last inspection report and this has been addressed well. There is good training for staff to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy in all subjects. At present subject coordinators are not monitoring this closely enough to ensure that students' skills are promoted effectively. Good links with outside agencies, together with the school's robust systems for tracking each individual, ensure that all students are supported well. Individual education plans have been improved well since the last inspection and the vast majority now have clear, measurable targets that are reviewed on a termly basis. Behaviour systems are robust and the many rewards and recognition of good work and behaviour are greatly appreciated by the students. There are good systems for risk assessment, particularly in supporting students' well-being, and these are shared well with staff and regularly updated.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school benefits from a strong leadership team that works well together. Staff show a strong commitment to providing a high level of support to students. They work very closely with parents and carers to ensure they have up-to-date information about how well their child is doing. Staff have gained from good professional development training. This is most evident at middle management level where managers are extending their leadership skills well. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective in supporting staff to improve their skills and share good practice. The school has achieved much in gathering a range of data and uses this well to check the progress of students on an individual basis.

In many aspects, the governing body support and challenge the school well and monitor the progress of developments closely. It is hampered in challenging more effectively due to the lack of information concerning the progress of different groups. The governing body monitors safeguarding arrangements effectively and at the time of the inspection these were good. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are very rigorous. Community cohesion is effective. Links with the local community are strong. The school has in place a number of links both nationally and globally and has detailed plans to develop these further.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Boarding provision

The school has strong links with the local nurse and adolescent mental health worker and this helps to ensure that the health needs of students are promoted and protected effectively. Health is well monitored and the school liaises with families in order to be clear about any health needs or required medical attention. Staff receive regular training in the safe handling of medication and first aid.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students are treated as individuals and difference is celebrated. Students and their parents have the information they need about the school and are kept up-to-date about any changes in the way the school is run.

Students are protected from harm and have their safety protected well. There are robust staff recruitment policies and procedures that help to promote students' safety. These include all required checks being carried out on new staff members prior to them commencing work in the school. Students say that their privacy is respected. They are well protected from bullying. There is a strong focus on preventing bullying in the school and students know that there are adults available to them who will challenge bullying should it occur. The school has organised anti-bullying days as a way to educate students about this issue. The systems for child protection are robust and promote safety. Training in child protection is high on the agenda in the school. Students are protected from dangers associated with using the internet, as staff have received training in this area. The school has also offered training to parents regarding this issue. There are good systems for handling complaints and for dealing with students who may go missing from the school, although this does not occur on a regular basis.

There is very good behaviour management in the school as staff are consistent in the care they provide to students. This helps students to develop boundaries and positive behaviour. Students are clear about the rules and routines and enjoy positive relationships

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with staff. Staff are good role models. They challenge inappropriate behaviour and praise positive behaviour. The close relationships that exist between school, care staff and link health care workers also help to promote students’ welfare. Students benefit from a varied and healthy diet and have excellent opportunities for trying new food. There are good opportunities for exercise such as hikes, biking, use of the school gymnasium, swimming and football.

Students feel listened to and think that their options are respected. There is a school council and a listening and responding system which promotes young people's chances of making a positive contribution to the running of the school. Young people think that they are treated fairly. They are able to give examples of changes being made as a result of their suggestions including the introduction of ice skating as an activity and different flavoured drinks being provided in the lodges.

Students live in a pleasant and well maintained environment. Bedrooms are for either one or two boys and they are able to request a swap of room in some circumstances. They are able to personalise their bedrooms. There are good arrangements for helping boys to settle in when they are new to the school. These include visits to the school to meet with staff. Students who are leaving receive support to do so in a positive way. A semi-independence unit has recently been opened and this well-equipped resource is being used to help students gain the skills they need for adulthood. There are good systems in place for ensuring that students live in a safe and secure environment. These include regular safety checks in and around the building and good fire safety arrangements. Risk assessments have been carried out and kept under review regarding the grounds of the school. However, there is no risk assessment of the premises and this practice does not fully promote students’ well-being.

There is strong management and a competent, enthusiastic and experienced staff team. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are employed in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the current students. Staff are well trained and feel well supported. There is a strong commitment to the development of the service and generally good systems for monitoring the quality of the service. Monitoring of some records, such as menus, the safe keeping of valuables and fire safety checks does not always occur and therefore monitoring does not fully promote the welfare of students.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Ensure that there is a written risk assessment of the premises that is kept under review. (NMS 26)
- Ensure that the head or senior staff member monitors and signs all records as detailed in national minimum standard 32.2. (NMS 32)

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

One parent responded to the questionnaire. Another parent contacted the inspector by phone. Both parents were positive about the school's impact in supporting their children. One parent commented that their son's 'behaviour and social skills have improved greatly since being at Starhurst. I am very pleased with the progress he has made. Staff are always available and are warm and friendly. Any issues are dealt with quickly and sensitively'. One parent raised concerns about the need to raise students' awareness of living in a multicultural society and in ensuring staff handle racist incidents effectively. The school has plans in place to develop students' awareness of life in a multicultural society. Discussions with staff and students suggest that any racist incidents are dealt with rigorously and students are certainly made aware of the consequences of any racism.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Starhurst 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 inspector received 1 completed questionnaire by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 40 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
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)	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



12 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Starhurst School, Dorking RH5 4DB

Thank you for being so helpful when I came to visit your school recently. A special 'thank you' must go to the students in the school council who took time to come and talk to me. It was great to hear you talk about life at school, and how much you have benefited from attending Starhurst.

Your school is a good school. I know that most of you work hard in lessons and, because of this, you do well in your learning. You work very hard at improving your behaviour and you clearly appreciate all the rewards and activities in school. It was good to hear you talk so positively about keeping healthy and to hear about all the different sports and activities you are involved in. The school is good at checking that you are all doing well and it looks after you well. Your teachers know you well and make sure you make good progress in your learning.

The school is well led by the headteacher and all the staff work hard to make sure you do well. Because the school wants to be even better, I have asked them to improve three areas.

- To make sure all teachers tell you how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve even more.
- To make sure that the governing body has better information about how well the different groups do in school.
- To make sure you have more opportunities to improve your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

I wish you well for the future and hope you continue with all your hard work in the community.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascal
Lead inspector

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