

Highview School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119044
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358486
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jon Carter

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Parry
Headteacher	Neil Birch
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
School address	Moat Farm Road Kent CT19 5DJ
Telephone number	01303258755
Fax number	01303251185
Email address	office@highview.kent.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by 13 teachers and held meetings with school leaders and managers, representatives from the governing body and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans, the governing body minutes, and records of the lesson monitoring carried out by the school's leaders. They analysed the responses from the 34 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from 98 pupils and 43 staff.

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

- How effectively teaching and the curriculum ensure that pupils make rapid progress and develop independence in all subjects, particularly English.
- How effectively school leaders and managers at all levels contribute to improved teaching and promote better community cohesion.
- The impact of the school's specialist status, federation arrangements and partnership working on pupils' achievement, learning and progress.

Information about the school

Highview is a specialist cognition and learning school of average size for pupils with complex learning needs. Most pupils have autistic spectrum disorders, moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Since the previous inspection, the school has been re-designated from being a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to one for those with complex learning needs to reflect the changing pupil profile. In addition, it has also become part of a hard federation with another special school, which mainly educates pupils with profound and severe learning difficulties. Two thirds of the pupils are in Key Stage 3 and 4. The school's headteacher is now the executive headteacher of the federation and a new post of head of education has been established as part of a staffing restructure.

The largest group in the school are pupils from White British backgrounds. The school has a lower than average percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few speak English as an additional language, or are at a very early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. There are two pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, who are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. The school holds Healthy School status and the Eco-Schools Green Flag.

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

Highview is a good school which is improving rapidly under the forward-thinking leadership of the headteacher. Pupils make consistently good progress in all areas of their learning and personal development. The impact of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support is particularly recognised by parents and carers. One wrote: 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school ethos and the care given to each child.' This view is typical of many comments received. Teaching supports pupils' good progress effectively through well-structured learning experiences. In some lessons, extremely enthusiastic teaching, coupled with a very clear focus on intended learning, leads to highly engaged pupils who make very good progress. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the school. The school's senior leadership team has taken concerted and effective action since the previous inspection to secure improvement in the quality of teaching.

The school's specialism and the development of outstanding partnerships with other local schools and organisations, including through the federation, have contributed strongly to teachers' professional development. Consequently, expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. Senior leaders and the governing body have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Middle leaders contribute to subject evaluation and development but monitoring activities are not extensive. This action ensures that continued progress is being made and demonstrates that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe at Highview. Their exemplary behaviour, both in lessons and at breaktimes, contributes strongly to the peaceful learning environment around the school. While pupils from different backgrounds mix harmoniously in lessons, their understanding of different cultures is less well developed than their social and moral skills. This is because there are limited opportunities for them to actively engage with pupils of a similar age from more diverse backgrounds.

Attendance is average overall. Pupils of secondary age have above average attendance. The attendance of primary-aged pupils is less good. However, in many cases, their absence from school is connected with their medical conditions and/or disabilities. The school has mostly effective systems for securing improvement for pupils identified with low levels of attendance, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Nevertheless, the regular and routine monitoring of the attendance of all pupils throughout the school is less well established so that clear actions to reduce absence can be implemented.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning and progress, so that this is more consistently outstanding across the school, by:
 - ? ensuring planning is more tightly focused on what pupils will learn and how individuals and groups will achieve their objectives
 - ? enabling middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in their subjects ?
 - placing greater emphasis on the active participation of all pupils in lessons to ensure the pace of learning is maintained ?
 - increasing pupils' opportunities to learn and apply information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the different heritages and cultures of the United Kingdom by providing purposeful opportunities to meet, work and play with those of similar ages from more diverse backgrounds.
- Improve pupils' attendance by ensuring that frequent and routine monitoring leads to well-targeted actions that reduce absence across all year groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage with a low level of skills. Pupils make good progress during lessons. In the primary classes, they particularly enjoy the frequent opportunities to be active and engaged in practical learning. In a Year 6 design and technology lesson, for example, pupils constructed models of Inukshuk stone landmarks from clay. This enabled them to review their learning about the geography of the Arctic Circle, demonstrate good progress in their design skills and hold conversations with staff that developed their language skills well.

Good progress in English is achieved by pupils throughout the school. Year 4 pupils, for instance, developed their language and writing skills well while describing the characteristics of a new animal in the familiar story of 'the shark in the milky way'. In Year 9, pupils made good progress using their reasoning skills while writing first person accounts as the character from a novel. They particularly valued the opportunity to evaluate the work of their peers. In doing so, they clearly demonstrated their good understanding of the lesson's learning objectives and their developing ability to work independently.

All pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects. There is minimal variation in how well different groups of pupils achieve, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those few who speak English as an additional language.

Attainment remains low due to the students' special educational needs and/or disabilities. An increasing proportion of students achieve entry level qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). A small number of students passed a GCSE examination in art.

Pupils are extremely proud of achieving the Eco-schools green flag. The environmental activities, undertaken diligently by both primary and secondary pupils, make a strong contribution to the school community and develop an awareness of social responsibility

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well. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles is seen in their routine and independent use of water bottles in class and their enthusiastic participation in physical activities, during and after school. This commitment to healthy lifestyles has been recognised by the award of Healthy School status.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?

Recent developments in the curriculum for pupils of all ages have contributed extensively to an improvement in pupils' learning and progress since the previous inspection. Teachers of primary pupils are increasingly able to personalise plans for individuals by identifying the skills they need to learn across a range of subjects. Themes selected to incorporate these skills match pupils' interests well. The mixture of elements of themed work and a focus on specific subjects provides well for pupils in Key Stage 3. The creative arts project, for example, encompasses a range of skills including multimedia ICT.

An improved range of accredited courses for pupils in Key Stage 4, particularly those provided in conjunction with local schools and colleges, ensure that pupils with different levels of ability and a wide range of interests are catered for well. For instance, pupils able to study mathematics to GCSE level have lessons at a local secondary school. While each

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pupil has an ICT lesson each week, opportunities for applying these skills in other lessons are less frequent.

Teaching usually takes good account of pupils' strengths and preferred ways of learning. Consequently, pupils are engaged, stimulated and learn well in most lessons. Assessment information is usually used to good effect to plan activities which move learning on swiftly. Occasionally, planning focuses on what pupils will do rather than on what they are expected to have learned by the end of the lesson. As a result, a small number of pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of. In some lessons, the pace of learning is slowed because pupils spend too much time listening passively to the teacher, rather than being actively engaged in learning.

In all parts of the school, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants have an extensive knowledge of ways to develop language and communication skills. Their routine use of systems for communication, such as sign language, ensure that pupils' speech, language and communication needs are comprehensively addressed. Teaching assistants are mostly effective in supporting pupils' learning. When working with individuals and small groups, they provide good support and useful feedback to both pupils and the teacher. However, they are not always used most effectively during whole-class teaching.

Transition arrangements are highly individualised and robust. Consequently, pupils settle quickly, irrespective of when they join the school. Particular care is taken to ensure that those transferring from other schools at the end of Year 6 are fully included. Pupils deemed to be vulnerable and their families receive very well co-ordinated support. Outstanding links with external agencies enable staff to provide exceptionally well-targeted help to pupils, parents and staff. This work is particularly effective in promoting improved independence, better attendance and ensuring that pupils' medical needs are very well managed. Pupils' social, emotional and behavioural development is closely monitored. As a result, the school is fully aware of the needs of individual pupils and can accurately evaluate the success of the support provided.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has developed a committed and capable team of senior leaders. A clear vision to provide an exceptional education is continuing to drive change and raise aspirations across the school. The school's specialist status, along with exceptional partnerships with research bodies and other providers, focus this work to good effect. Staff have embraced this vision and the responsibility for developing the curriculum is now

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shared with middle leaders. However, they do not monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in their subjects. Funding, previously intended for a new building, has been reallocated to provide a greater range of intervention programmes and training for staff so that pupils' individual needs can be better met. This has contributed strongly to recent improvements in pupils' learning and progress. The governing body is proactive in supporting the school. Regular visits are made to classrooms and productive partnerships are becoming well established with school staff.

Arrangements for ensuring that pupils are adequately safeguarded are good. Staff are trained regularly and recruitment procedures are robust. The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is good. School leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils' backgrounds. Staff focus routinely on supporting families so that pupils' access to education, health and social services supports all aspects of their development well. Pupils currently have few opportunities to engage with others of similar age from different backgrounds, although plans are in place to address this issue to better promote community cohesion.

There is a strong ethos of equality in all aspects of the school's work. Rigorous monitoring ensures that no group of pupils makes progress at a significantly different rate to others. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards their peers and the school operates harmoniously on a day-to-day basis. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below the level of those typically found for their age. They make good progress. The setting enables staff to plan a coherent curriculum which focuses well on securing improvement in all areas of learning in

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the Reception Year and Year 1. Good use is made of regular observations to assess children's current development and needs. Planning utilises this information well to ensure that learning activities address areas of the greatest need. Teaching is engaging and children respond well to the calm and friendly staff; this promotes children's confidence very effectively.

Staff have excellent skills in promoting communication and language development. This proficiency, together with their expertise in structuring purposeful conversations, ensures that children progress swiftly. Teaching assistants are well deployed and effective at supporting learning during both whole-class and small-group work. In some lessons, too much time is spent on teacher-led work rather than group and individual activities, which slows the pace of learning.

Leaders recognise that some aspects of the facilities have less impact on children's learning. The outdoor learning area is small so regular opportunities for developing physical skills, such as by riding trikes and running around, are somewhat restricted.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are particularly pleased about the quality of care that is provided by staff at the school. This view is endorsed by the inspection team. A few parents and carers expressed concern about how well the school meets their child's needs and the progress that they make. During this inspection, inspectors found that there is little difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils and that, in lessons, pupils' needs were generally met well so that they were able to make good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	50	15	44	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	41	18	53	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	50	11	32	1	3	2	6
The teaching is good at this school	18	53	14	41	1	3	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	47	16	47	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	44	17	50	2	6	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)	15	44	14	41	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	44	16	47	1	3	2	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	32	21	62	0	0	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	38	19	56	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	50	14	41	3	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	47	16	47	2	6	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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">■ 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.



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highview School, Folkestone, CT19 5DJ

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We were very pleased to see you enjoying your lessons. Your school council and eco-council were very keen to talk to us. You told us about the responsible way you help your school to be environmentally friendly and how you help make decisions, such as when your school needs a new teacher. You also told us that you feel very safe at school.

I am writing to tell you that you go to a good school. Mr Birch and the rest of the school's staff have worked hard to make sure you make good progress in your learning. You have played your part as well. Your behaviour is outstanding ? well done! Your teachers are especially good at helping you develop your language and communication skills. They also make sure that no one is left behind and that everyone gets the help they need during lessons.

To help your teachers focus on what they need to do to make your school even better, we have asked them to:

- ensure teachers concentrate on what they want you to learn and give you plenty of time to complete activities for yourselves, especially using computers where possible
- give you more opportunities to meet, work and play with pupils from different cultures
- help some of you to improve your attendance at school.

All of you can help by coming to school every day unless there is a really good reason why you cannot do so.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter Lead inspector

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