

# New Horizons School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114697
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	357591
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Marshall

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 special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	76
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Emma Cochrane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frank Stanford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Beauchamp Road St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 9JU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During the inspection twelve lessons and eleven teachers were observed. Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers and students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's improvement plan, the tracking of students' progress and records of the support provided to them, and minutes of governing body meetings. In addition, questionnaires from nine parents and carers, and others from staff and students were analysed.

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

- The extent to which, since reorganisation, changes in assessment and tracking procedures, are increasing the level of challenge and sustaining progress across the school.
- Students' personal development and the effectiveness of the school's measures to enhance students' social development.
- The degree to which developments to the curriculum since reorganisation are meeting the needs of all students.
- In the light of the reorganisation, and their self-evaluation grades re outcomes and capacity to improve, how effectively leaders and managers at all levels, including the governors, are enabling continuity and development.

## Information about the school

New Horizons is an average-size special school providing for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Every student has a statement of special educational needs. The school is based on two sites approximately one mile apart. One site hosts the Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 age groups. The other site hosts Key Stage 4 and the ASD Unit. Although the school is co-educational, the majority of students are male. Currently, there are five girls in the school. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.

The school has been involved in a restructuring process for the last eighteen months. A senior member of staff from a nearby federation of special schools was appointed initially as acting head of school and then became the substantive head of school of New Horizons School in January 2010. In the spring of 2010 the governing body began undergoing procedures to formally collaborate with the local federation under the leadership of the current executive headteacher. In September 2010 the school started a formal staff restructuring process. Both governing bodies remain in existence and New Horizons retains its separate budget and identity, but there is formal collaboration/partnership in terms of leadership, policies and staff development.

**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****1**

## Main findings

New Horizon provides a good, and rapidly improving, education for all of its students, whatever their specific need might be. The range of equipment and facilities has been radically improved in the last year and staff have created a very well maintained and welcoming environment. Students' work is everywhere to be seen. Staff take great pride in the displays that are around the school which praise and encourage students for their achievements. The joy that students express shows that they in turn are proud of their school. Thanks to the individual care they receive, students all work hard and progress well. The few parents and carers who communicated with the inspection team were right in their judgement that this is an increasingly effective school. One spoke on behalf of them by writing succinctly, 'New Horizons has provided my son with a new start and the best chance to pursue his interests into employment.'

The executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders and governors provide highly effective leadership. They know the school's strengths completely and what needs to be refined further. The school's view of itself is accurate and its collaboration with another school has enabled it to move forward rapidly and has created an atmosphere where all are focused relentlessly on improvement. As a result, the school has an excellent capacity to continue improving.

The most obvious and affecting aspect of the school, that visitors rightly recognise, is the dedication and commitment of all staff at all times. All staff promote their belief that each student is a valued individual with the right to respect and a positive self-image. The students' individual profiles and records seen actively support this commitment and show how increasingly successful they are being. Although the quality of teaching varies, it is good overall and, in some instances, is outstanding. The school, through the lead of the senior staff, has formed an exemplary range of assessment methods and sees the use of assessment as fundamental to its improvement in provision. Students' progress, across a variety of complex needs, can be systematically demonstrated.

Assessment is now enabling teachers to shape and better adapt their teaching to individual needs and is at the heart of their increasingly effective curriculum. There are many opportunities for students to practise and reinforce their basic skills across different subject areas. However, many of these systems are new and there are lessons where the activities are not as relevant and focused on the students' needs and next steps. The school recognises for all teaching to be as good as the best these methods have to be embedded and used consistently so that all students recognise their achievement, know how best to move forward and make maximum progress.

Safeguarding procedures are outstanding and students' safety and well-being are paramount at all times. Students mostly behave well in lessons and around the school thanks to the very effective reward systems introduced that they understand and

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appreciate. The students say they feel safe, reflecting the staff's high expectations and very effective level of care and moral guidance. Students have a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Despite the number of difficulties some students have, their attendance overall is above average.

The school does much to promote its place in the local community and has very good partnerships with many organisations through its collaboration with other schools. Its audit of community cohesion, undertaken by governing body and staff, is underpinned by a careful analysis of the school's context. The links with schools abroad have begun to be established well and students' awareness of, and preparation for, living and working in a culturally diverse United Kingdom are also being developed well.

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

- Raise the overall quality of teaching and learning in all lessons to that of the best by:
  - embedding changes in the use of assessment so that the relevant activities across subject areas are present in all lessons.
  - ensuring in all lessons that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.

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

**2**

Although there are variations, due to their earlier very poor attendance, students enter the school with standards that are well below expectations for their age. All students now make a very good start on entry to the school as baseline assessments are rigorous and integration plans, with supportive care, are very well thought out. Observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed that, throughout the school, all groups of students make good, and often better, progress towards the clear and challenging targets in their individual education plans. All students gain a good level of self-esteem due to the excellent relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met through one-to-one provision.

Carefully planned interventions are apparent in all teachers' planning. It was impressive to observe good behaviour in all lessons, and the skills students acquire in working independently or with their classmates. This helps to create the good quality climate for learning that was evident in all classes. This year every Year 11 student completed a number of certified courses, with the large majority taking a series of GCSEs. The school has steadily increased these opportunities further, and all school leavers this year are going on to study at local colleges in academic or vocational areas. These moves to further education are now very carefully planned and monitored.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The students make good progress with their life skills as the modified curriculum is providing an extensive range of opportunities to develop them, for example through off-site visits and visitors to school. Students respond well to encouragement to sustain a healthy lifestyle in relation to diet, exercise and emotional development. They develop an increasing sense of self-worth and dignity due to the excellent relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met, as when specific care or medical support is provided. As one student recalled, new students often struggle at first to conform but the school's rewards system and keen participation in the activities 'changes people straight away'. Students

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recognise that there are problems sometimes, but they are clear about whom they should go to and are confident that staff will address any issues they may have.

The strength of the relationships students develop was demonstrated admirably in an assembly all about 'Winning'. The focus was on making the most of all opportunities, and all students responded to each other and their rewards admirably. Such experiences make a significant contribution to students' developing standards in speaking and listening, their improved self-esteem and overall personal development.

*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>	3
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

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching and learning are good. In almost all lessons, there are strong elements that help students of all abilities to make good progress. But, as the school recognises, this could be more consistent. In the large majority of cases, teachers set out clear objectives and sessions are well managed. Students experience a good mix of listening to the teacher, responding to questions and opportunities to discuss their work among themselves. This experience, along with outstanding strategies to manage students' behaviour, means that students become attentive and display very good attitudes to learning. These outstanding qualities were evident in an outstanding Year 10 English lesson where students' attention was kept through the brisk pace, use of different resources and individual, probing questions.

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The curriculum has been very carefully developed in the last year to improve students' learning by adding extra relevance and enjoyment through the effective use of assessment. Targets are set which relate both to the curriculum and to individual needs and, in the best lessons, these are used with precision to monitor progress and inform next steps in students' learning. Targets are discussed and reinforced regularly and students themselves are generally enabled to evaluate their own progress across the curriculum. There are now many aspects, such as the themed topics and those which focus on students' interests, which are effective and fully enjoyed. However, students' progress slows occasionally as not all teachers are able to harness this innovative planning based on assessment to the same degree.

The school has a very strong commitment to caring and support. Every pupil is known and treated as an individual. Vulnerable students, often coming in from being permanently excluded from other schools, are extremely well supported and the school works very effectively in partnership with a range of agencies to meet their needs. If there is one aspect of the school's very effective care for individual students that is particularly notable, it is the work of the pastoral care team and the teaching assistants. The zeal, patience and understanding they show to the vulnerable students result in the students settling and achieving very well and is an inspiration to all others in the school.

*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>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The executive headteacher and the head of school provide outstanding leadership, drive and ambition to create an excellent capacity to improve. Teamwork is excellent and the attention to detail and supportive approach ensures that complacency is not tolerated. The administrative team members are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. Staff are focused relentlessly on further improvement and work brilliantly together. As one staff member said, reflecting the views of all, 'There is still a way to go but we are all proud to be here now and we know we are making a real difference.'

The school understands its strengths and areas for development very well and sets the right targets to become even better. Documentation is impressive and the evaluation of the school's work in enabling the reorganisation to be as effective and smooth as possible is honest and accurate. The governing body is fully involved in this process, challenging decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. It holds the school to account in a challenging, but supportive, manner. Its focus through the re-organisation has enabled the school to thrive in all directions.

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Excellent attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure the highest quality of safety and care for the students. There are, for example, excellent procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of students through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Students' safety and well-being are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be. The senior managers, supported well by all staff, are effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination for all students across all aspects of the school's work, demonstrated by their action to reduce any gender differences in attainment. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is good. A plan and clear actions are in place for promoting students' understanding from a local, national and global perspective.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</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>1</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 majority of the very small proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are happy with the school and the provision their children are receiving. They consider that the school has a dedicated team of staff and the head of school leads and manages the provision very well. They agree that the school has a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere and that their children make good progress. Inspectors fully endorse these views. The very small number of constructive concerns were followed up during the inspection, as part of the general gathering of evidence, and discussed with the head of school.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at New Horizons 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 9 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	44	2	22	0	0	1	11
The school keeps my child safe	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	5	56	3	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	56	3	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	44	5	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	44	5	56	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)	5	56	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	67	1	11	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	67	1	11	1	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	33	5	56	1	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	33	5	56	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	67	2	22	1	11	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"><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.**



30 June 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of New Horizons School, St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 9JU**

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently. We did enjoy our visit. Yours is a good school, and we agree with what you told us it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the things that we think are really good.

- The school looks after you very carefully and you all achieve well by the time you leave.
- You behave well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You often have very good ideas about how to make things better and you have a good understanding of how to live healthily.
- You settle down well and find lessons interesting and really enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do, in school and on visits.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school extremely well.

Even in good schools there are some things that can be made better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that, no matter which class you are in, you are given the best possible opportunities to learn, and that you are all given the chance to understand how well you are progressing.

Finally, we would like to thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall

Lead inspector

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