

The Lindfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114693
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	363824
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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

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	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Neal
Headteacher	Remo Palladino
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, seeing 12 teachers. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school and others with posts of responsibility. In addition, meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding and a representative from the local authority's School Improvement Service. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at development plans, curriculum planning, the school's tracking data showing students' progress, teachers' lesson plans and samples of students' work. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 23 parents and carers, 52 students and 13 staff.

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

- How effective are leaders at all levels, including the governing body, in moving the school 'onwards and upwards'?
- Does the school have a consistent track record of improving students' achievement at the end of Key Stage 4?
- Is teaching sufficiently challenging for students, enabling all groups to learn effectively and make the best progress possible?
- How effective is the curriculum in meeting the needs of all groups of students?

Information about the school

The Lindfield School provides for students with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and for those with social, communication and associated learning difficulties. There are increasing numbers of students with complex needs. All have a statement of special educational needs. The school has a specialist department for those with autistic spectrum disorders. The very large majority of students are White British and come from a variety of communities across East Sussex and most are transported to school by taxi, some travelling for up to one hour from their homes. There are currently twice as many boys than girls. Three students are looked after by the local authority and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.

Since the previous inspection, when the school was given a 'notice to improve' because of weaknesses in leadership and management, including governance, there have been changes. Shortly after the inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed along with new members. In March, 2011, an Ofsted monitoring inspection found the school was making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement. In June 2011 the school joined in a formal partnership with the South Downs Community Special School, both schools having worked closely together in the past in a number of areas. The then acting headteacher of The Lindfield School became head of school and an executive headteacher for both schools was appointed. The school retains its own governing

body and leadership team. A special governing group oversees the work of the partnership.

The school has achieved The National Autistic Society's accreditation for Quality of Autism Provision and the Silver Healthy Schools award.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school provides a good education. This is as a result of the head of school's tireless drive for improvement and the significant changes made in response to the previous inspection report. The recent appointment of an executive headteacher has resulted in further initiatives, particularly in the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders. The school now meets its core aim of providing a positive, safe and caring community where students are happy, confident and successful. It is a school where all are students are valued and treated with dignity and respect. The quality of care, guidance and support for students continues to be good and at the forefront of the school's provision; safeguarding arrangements are now good and much improved. This effectively supports the good progress in almost all aspects of their personal development and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. However, the school recognises it could support further students' preparation for their future economic well-being by providing more opportunities to experience work placements in Years 10 and 11. Students' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show they enjoy school as well as being highly positive about all aspects of its provision. Every day, not only do they arrive with smiling faces, but also leave at end of the day that way. Parents and carers too are appreciative of the school's work. One summed up the typical view noting, 'My child is thriving, loves going to school and even though learning is difficult, my child has progressed a lot even in only one year.'

Students' academic progress across the school is good and school data show this is now improving rapidly over time in relation to their starting points for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are no significant differences between different groups of students, including boys or girls, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. The school's effectiveness in improving the progress of students with autistic spectrum disorders has been recognised by The National Autistic Society's accreditation for Quality of Autism Provision.

Teaching is good and has improved as a result of the school's focus on increasing the rates of progress students make and using the analysis of performance data more effectively. Learning support assistants and other adults who work in lessons contribute well to this. The increased use of signing by adults helps students'

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communication skills improve effectively and underpins the quality of their learning and the good progress they make in lessons. Changes have been made to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of students more effectively. It has been enlivened by cross-curricular theme days and a broad range of enrichment activities within and beyond the school.

The executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior leaders have a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school, with a focus on continuing improvement, particularly in teaching, learning and student progress. All staff support the school's ethos and actions to support further improvement and have the best interests of students at heart. Curriculum content and enrichment activities support the school's good promotion of community cohesion within the school itself and the local community and beyond.

Although the school recognises that there is still room for improvement, all the areas specifically identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been remedied. Self-evaluation is accurate and underpins effectively its strategic planning. The governing body supports the work of the school and has improved its effectiveness in this respect. However, the impact of the introduction of a committee structure has yet to be felt in terms of challenging the work of the school and holding it to account. The new roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, introduced by the new leadership team, have resulted greater accountability for all staff. In light of this, the school's current capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and holding the school fully to account.
- Provide more direct opportunities to enable students to take part in work experience in Years 10 and 11.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In lessons students, regardless of their needs or backgrounds, consolidate and build on previous learning well and make good progress in new learning. This also includes lessons for the Year 7 transition group, the learning support group and in the autistic spectrum disorders department. They benefit greatly from appropriately focused individual attention from the adults in the room. In an English lesson, the work on images of war was planned effectively to ensure that the differing needs of the two groups were met, with the two adults in the room supporting a group each. This enabled all students to develop well their knowledge and understanding of the themes explored in poetry of Wilfred Owen. Progress is good in mathematics lessons as older students improve their individual competencies in working out problems based on fractions. In a good lesson in the autistic spectrum disorders department, six very different students were involved in suitable tasks which developed their mathematics skills (ranging from shapes to simple additions) as well as improving

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their social and communication skills.

Students told the inspectors that the school is a safe place to be and that if they had any concerns adults would listen to them. Although there are occasional outbursts, caused mainly by frustrations rather than untoward intentions, learning was not interrupted by any disruptive behaviour during the inspection. Students respond well to the clear and consistent routines used by staff in managing behaviour. The atmosphere in the dining area at lunchtimes and outside at break times is calm and sociable, being underpinned by good relationships between staff and students. Students eat healthily, take part in a broad range of physical activities and know and understand the importance of this. Indicative of students’ understanding in this respect is the Silver Healthy Schools award. Students feel they are listened to because they are consulted regularly about their views. They are keen to take on responsibilities and represent the school in the local community. When they leave the school all students move on to further education or training.

Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They experience a range of activities across the year to support these aspects of their development. They respect each other’s differences and have good relationships with their peers and with staff in the school.

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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Students are particularly appreciative of staff helping them improve the quality of

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

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their work and, as a result, they say they know how well they are doing. This is because teachers and other adults work effectively together and know the needs of students well. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well and their sensitive and careful interventions help students stay on task. Praise is never overly effusive and is used wisely by all adults in the room to encourage perseverance and successful outcomes. This was particularly effective in a Year 7 transition group lesson where students successfully completed the range of tasks which had been set for them. On occasions, though, there is a tendency for some adults to provide answers too quickly rather than using questions more effectively to encourage the students to work out responses for themselves. Teachers are adept at using information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and enliven learning. Class management is effective because it is consistently calm, yet purposeful, and students are made fully aware of teachers' expectations in this respect. As a result, for example, movement between lessons to the different subject rooms is orderly and arrival to lessons is punctual, with all students keen and ready to learn.

The curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It contributes effectively to students' academic progress and personal development, including aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The full National Curriculum is taught to all and there is good provision for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The introduction of and focus on Makaton signing has improved students' communication skills and enables greater accessibility by pupils to the subjects offered. Throughout the year a broad range of enrichment activities, both within the school and beyond, extend students' learning and develop further their interests. Links with further education colleges are developing well for the benefit of older students.

Students' health and well-being are at the forefront of the school's strong ethos of care and sensitivity to students' needs. Adults work hard to ensure this, helping each individual, including the most vulnerable regardless of background, in very specific ways. As a result, students' welfare requirements are met and all are looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment. A carefully managed and executed programme of reviews is effective in supporting students on arrival, throughout their time there and when they leave. Parents and carers too are supported and involved in their child's education and welfare. One parent commented, 'The school is very good with advice and helping with my child as and when I need it.' Above-average attendance is as a result of the school's effective procedures for reducing absence, particularly unauthorised absences.

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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 drive and ambition of the head of school, prior to the new partnership, resulted in a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning as well as all other areas, which brought and continues to bring good improvements. In this she was supported well by the local authority. Improvement planning had a clear focus on the issues raised at the previous inspection and now, as a result of the new partnership, accurate self-evaluation has identified further areas for development. New roles and responsibilities at leadership level have been implemented with the aim of moving the school further 'onwards and upwards'. Staff are supportive of the school's ethos and share the leadership's vision.

The school has good collaborative working with an extensive range of other professionals and specialist providers to extend curriculum opportunities and to support students' medical and personal needs. In addition, it has worked hard and successfully to re-engage parents and carers. It is effective in ensuring all students have equality of opportunity. It tackles any discrimination and achieves an effective ethos of inclusion, with no underachievement of any individual or group. The governing body works closely with the school to ensure safeguarding procedures and practices are effective, up to date and reflect current guidance. Members attend whole-school training on safeguarding and receive regular updates from the school as regards any areas for concern. The school's work in promoting community cohesion within the school, locally and beyond is good and underpinned by effective policies and planning for provision. Given the outcomes the school achieves, it is providing good value for money.

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

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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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was below the national average for special schools. Of the proportion of those returned, without exception, all parents and carers are happy with all aspects of the school’s work. This inspection endorses these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Lindfield 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 79 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	70	6	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	74	5	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	10	43	11	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	43	12	52	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	61	8	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	11	48	11	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	57	9	39	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)	12	52	9	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	70	6	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	61	7	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	52	0	39	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	61	8	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	17	74	5	22	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	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.



22 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Lindfield School, Eastbourne, BN22 0BQ

Not so long ago, two of us came to your school to see how well you are getting on. We also wanted to know whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We enjoyed our time at the school and meeting you in lessons and around the school. Your responses to the Ofsted questionnaire showed that almost all of you felt you learned a lot in lessons and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job. We agree, and can see why.

We think your school has improved in so many ways since the last inspection and it now gives you a good education. Here are some of the other good things we found.

- All the staff care for you and make sure you are safe.
- You all make good progress in your academic and personal development.
- In lessons, teachers and other adults give you lots of help and support.
- There are lots of interesting and enjoyable things for you to do.
- The school works really well with lots of other people, including your parents and carers, to help you.
- The head of school and the executive headteacher have plans to make things even better for you.

In order to make further improvements we have asked the head of school and the executive headteacher to:

- make sure the school's governing body improves the way it supports the school
- provide work-experience opportunities for those of you in Years 10 and 11.

You too can help by continuing to enjoy the school. Many thanks for letting us see what you were learning in school during our visit.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden
Lead inspector

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