

Clifton Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125470
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	381077
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Lopez
Headteacher	Andrea Ashton–Coulton
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 June 2009
School address	Chaldon Road Caterham CR3 5PH
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited lessons in all 10 classes and observed 10 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, the chair of the governing body and members of the senior leadership team. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, such as assessment data, school improvement planning, students' individual education plans and their records of achievement. The 33 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by staff and students.

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

- It examined the procedures for tracking students' progress, including the effectiveness of video and photographic evidence, and the use of this information in evaluating progress.
- It reviewed the extent to which staff use assessment of students' previous learning and different communication strategies to promote independent learning through planned and tailored activities that meet individuals' needs.
- It investigated the use of information and communication technology as a teaching, learning and communication tool.
- It analysed how efficiently available teaching time is used.

Information about the school

Clifton Hill is an average-sized special school that admits students from a small number of adjoining local authorities as well as its own. All of the students have a statement of special educational needs for severe learning difficulties, although in half of cases they have additional more profound learning difficulties or autism. There are almost twice as many boys as girls on roll. Approximately a quarter of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, and a few are looked after children. Just over three quarters of students have a White British heritage; the other students span a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds.

The school is in receipt of a Healthy School Award and it has accreditation for Working in Partnership with Parents. The current headteacher took up post in April 2010. The school does not have separate post-16 provision. Students in Years 10 to 14 are grouped according to their capabilities, severity of learning needs and the nature of their learning styles.

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

Clifton Hill is a good school with effective post-16 provision. Students love going to school. Their attendance is high and they behave well, participating enthusiastically in all activities. Students' very positive views of the school are echoed by their parents and carers. The school has good links with parents and carers and virtually all of them confirm that they are happy with the school and that their child enjoys being there. The comment, 'Students are taught in a friendly, supportive and stimulating environment and staff are always happy to help and support parents' reflects the views of many. Students make excellent progress in many aspects of personal development, including self-help skills and improvements in independence, mobility and confidence. In many respects students receive a high quality of personal care, guidance and support. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Students make good progress in their learning. All achieve well, irrespective of their age or the complexity of their learning difficulty. A good quality education is responsible for this good rate of progress. All students follow a rich, well-constructed curriculum and they are generally taught well. More rapid progress is hampered by a very small amount of inconsistency in a few aspects of classroom practice. Time is not always used as efficiently as it could be to maximise available learning opportunities, and not every lesson plan focuses precisely enough on the small gains in learning that individuals are expected to make. In these instances, it is more difficult for staff to record these small achievements, and when photographs are used to show this, there is not always a clear explanation of what is being demonstrated. In the vast majority of lessons, staff use a range of communication approaches very well to ensure all students' engagement, but just occasionally there is too much emphasis on speech alone.

Members of the leadership team are relatively new to their current roles, but they have made an impressive start to establishing effective systems for self-evaluation. They use the findings of self-audit well to guide school improvement planning, including the promotion of best classroom practice. The school's excellent links with partner organisations contribute significantly to students' learning. Leaders monitor students' learning carefully, although the school does not exploit fully opportunities to examine their progress within the context of similar students nationally. The school has good capacity to continue to improve, with all staff fully committed to improvement. The governing body, which carries out its duties effectively, is also a full partner in this drive for improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate at which students learn by developing consistency in:
 - lesson planning, by ensuring that teachers always focus on precisely what they expect individuals to learn, enabling staff to record more accurately students' small gains in learning
 - adults' use of communication systems additional to speech with those students for whom it is appropriate
 - teachers' leadership and management of their class teams so that efficient use is made of all available teaching time.
- Further develop procedures for recording and analysing students' achievements by:
 - ensuring that all staff annotate photographic evidence of students' achievements in ways that illustrate their learning precisely
 - extending leaders' use of statistical information to compare students' progress with those of similar levels of attainment elsewhere.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' learning progresses at a good pace, aided by their high attendance. No student groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, in public care or with different ethnic backgrounds, perform less well than others. Students make good progress in acquiring key communication and numeracy skills, especially those functional skills that stand them in good stead both now and in the future. These include, for instance, using money and food shopping. Consequently, students are successful in a range of accredited courses that they follow from Year 10 onwards. Students' eagerness contributed much to the good progress that they made in the lessons observed. For example, one class developed their sequencing skills well as they followed a recipe, while students in another class recalled events from their holiday, found appropriate images and explained what they had enjoyed. On very rare occasions, students pursue courses in local mainstream schools and this has resulted in GCSE passes in subjects such as art. Students celebrate success in other ways too, such as by completing the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The promotion of students' personal development is a strength of the school. Within the context of their learning difficulties, students have an outstanding awareness of how to stay safe and an excellent understanding of what they need to do to remain healthy, as reflected in the Healthy Schools award. Insofar as they are able, students make an excellent contribution to the school community and beyond. They take on small jobs within school, which become increasingly challenging as they get older, and they may represent their classmates on the active school council. Extensive community-based learning introduces students to many new situations, and their horizons are widened further when they participate in national fund-raising activities. These new experiences supplement very well the school-based activities that contribute to students' growing appreciation of the world around them and of those who populate it. They make very good progress in their ability to interact socially and

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to respect the rights and needs of others.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Class teams have a very good understanding of students' needs and prior achievements. In a large majority of cases, teachers use this knowledge well to plan challenging personalised learning activities that encourage students to learn as independently as possible, with selective prompting by teaching assistants. Occasionally, lesson planning lacks such detail, as there is insufficient clarity about what individuals are expected to achieve. This reduces staff's ability to evaluate the extent of students' learning. Relationships are exceptionally strong and high quality interactions between adults and students are a feature of all lessons. In the vast majority of cases, such exchanges are highly productive, as staff use communication approaches that meet individuals' requirements, such as signing and objects of reference. However, in a very few cases, such a comprehensive approach is not evident. Staff use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to motivate students. They enable students to access a good variety of activities by providing effective practical aids and learning resources. A large majority of lessons are well paced and structured. Classrooms are organised to ensure easy access to resources and smooth transitions from one activity to another. In a very small number of cases, however, this is not the case and so time is lost. Time is also lost occasionally when teachers are not sufficiently strict in ensuring that lessons start promptly, such as after break and lunchtime.

The curriculum for all students focuses on personal, social and health education and

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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the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. This basic core is then extended, modified, planned and organised well in ways that meet the age, interests and learning styles and needs of different groups of students. For instance, students with the most profound needs access learning through sensory-based activities, while students aged 14 to 19 years follow a strong work-related learning programme. Work experience, a mini enterprise and college links all contribute to preparing students well for leaving school. Many excellent additional learning opportunities enrich students’ learning experiences. Visitors into school, community-based learning and residential visits both here and abroad contribute greatly to students’ progress.

Organisation for the care, guidance and support for students and their families is well targeted to meet their needs. Support for students’ personal development is especially strong. Individually tailored programmes integrate carefully the input of therapists and outside agencies, resulting in coherent and flexible packages of support. The primary vehicles for target setting and for supporting students’ learning are Learning Journey folders and individual education plans, although leaders have recognised the need to improve the value and effectiveness of the latter. Students’ learning is supported well in incidental ways too, such as the many very good wall displays that always include comments in symbols to ensure that all students benefit.

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 current leadership team has made significant changes in a relatively short time. Leaders’ vision for the future is shared by all staff. They are unanimous in agreeing that they know what is trying to be achieved and how they can contribute to its success. Leaders’ initial resolve to raise standards through teachers’ more effective delivery of an improved curriculum has been successful, and it reflects the school’s good commitment to the eradication of discrimination and to equality of opportunity for all students. Leaders pursue this determination to ensure that all students do as well as they can by analysing all data carefully. They have established good moderation exercises to test the accuracy of teachers’ assessment information, although they have not yet ensured a consistent approach to teachers’ use of photographs as evidence of students’ learning. Furthermore, the school is at an early stage of comparing students’ progress with that of similar students in other settings.

An effective governing body was fully involved in the establishment of good safeguarding practice that ensures students’ safety. Child protection and associated

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procedures are fully understood by staff and they are monitored annually, when the views of parents, carers and students are sought. Joint working between school leaders and the governing body resulted in a good response to the school’s responsibility to promote community cohesion, which again was developed with parents’ and carers’ views. The school is well informed about students’ home circumstances, and it has an effective action plan to develop its influence at local, national and international levels. Such a development is indicative of the school’s ambition and of its pursuit of continually improving the quality of its provision. It is well placed to do so because leaders have set out what they wish to achieve and how they intend to achieve it, and the governing body, parents, carers and staff all recognise and accept these aims and are enthusiastic about lending their support.

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

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Sixth form

Provision for students above the age of 16 years is managed well. It focuses on preparing virtually all students for transition into further educational placements and does the job well. It is successful because a good curriculum and high quality care, guidance and support underpin good teaching that enables students to make good progress in their academic and personal development. In particular, the promotion of students’ self-help skills and the other learning that takes place in real-life situations support classroom-based learning very well.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents’ and carers’ views align closely with those of the inspection team. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value greatly the work that it does. They are unanimous in the view that the school keeps them fully informed about how well their child is progressing. Many commented on how well the school communicates and includes them as partners in their child’s learning and development, and the extent to which it helps them as well as their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clifton Hill 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	85	4	12	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	70	5	15	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	76	5	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	24	73	5	15	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	70	8	24	1	3	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)	22	67	7	21	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	79	4	12	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	64	4	12	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	76	5	15	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	25	76	5	15	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	27	82	5	15	0	0	1	3

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



16 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Clifton Hill School, Caterham CR3 5PH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. Special thanks go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us. You are proud of your school and we can see why. Clifton Hill is a good school and it gives you lots of interesting things to do. Lessons are good and you make good progress in your work. We saw you working very hard in lessons.

The staff take good care of you and we can see why you love going to school. You told us that you learn a lot in lessons and that there is always an adult to talk to if you are worried. You impressed us as lively and confident young people who enjoy school life. You obviously look forward to school trips and visits to places where you stay overnight. The ski trip must be really exciting. You know a great deal about how to stay safe and how to live a healthy life. You listen and concentrate well in classes, and are always ready to help your friends and do small jobs around the school.

The people who run your school do a good job. They have made many changes recently and they have many ideas about how they can make the school even better. We have asked them to do some things as well.

- Make sure that all of you learn as much as you possibly can in every lesson.
- Check very carefully that teachers record all of your good work.

You can help them to make these improvements by carrying on going to school as often as you can, and by continuing to behave so well while you are there.

Finally, thank you once again for welcoming us into your school and I wish each of you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell
Lead inspector

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