

Southfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135230
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	364045
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Katharine Halifax

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	197
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor Donna Pankhurst
Headteacher	Dominic Wall
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 17 different teachers or members of support staff. Further time was spent looking at pupils' records, workbooks, and information about pupils' progress. Inspectors held meetings with leaders, governors, staff, pupils, parents and carers, and other professionals. They looked at the school's review of its work, the current development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, and documentation to ensure pupils are safe. The responses to 32 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- How reliable are assessments in demonstrating progress and are assessments used effectively?
- Is the provision in the sixth form effective in enabling students to achieve academically as well as in their personal development?
- Is the provision ensuring the well-being and skill maintenance of pupils with life-limiting or degenerative conditions fully effective?
- How well does the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with complex needs and those who have a gift or talent?
- Are leaders successful in creating a sense of unity and in driving school improvement?

Information about the school

This larger-than-average special school opened in April 2010 under the local authority reorganisation of its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The first year was spent on the two sites of the amalgamating schools. In June, it moved to its new building and is now co-located with Grange Technology College. An application has been made for both schools to become academies under the oversight of a single trust. Students in the sixth form are taught on a separate site in the Pathfinder Vocation Centre. The vocational element of their curriculum is provided by the school alongside Bradford and Shipley Colleges. Over one third of pupils have severe learning difficulties, almost another third have profound and multiples needs, and one tenth have moderate learning difficulties, others have autism, physical disabilities or sensory impairment. All have a statement to meet their special needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are of either White British or Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils from Eastern Europe is small but increasing. While many pupils speak English as their principal language at home, the proportion of pupils at an early stage of learning English is increasing. In the past year, the school has achieved Healthy School status, an ECO green flag, an Arts Award, the Disport Bronze Award and the Trinity College Arts 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly. Much has been achieved, particularly in the short time since the move to the new build. The staff of the two schools have come together successfully as a unified school. Furthermore, leaders are gradually winning over the trust of parents and carers, many of whom were opposed to the move. Leaders have provided very good support. As a consequence, most staff have raised their game and morale is improving. However, a few of the staff are not yet ready to focus on the future direction of the school now that the move has been completed.

As a result of intensive professional training, the quality of teaching is improving, but there are still inconsistencies, especially in the use of individual education plans, the knowledge and use of support staff, and in the use of signs and symbols and other resources to aid pupils with complex needs and communications difficulties. Initially, there were considerable differences in the accuracy of teacher assessments and this made tracking pupils' progress difficult. Through rigorous work, assessment is now more accurate and a clearer picture is beginning to emerge. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, the progress of pupils with complex needs and those with communication difficulties is patchy. While they mostly do well with their class teachers, this is not always so when working with other staff who have limited experience and understanding.

Pupils receive good care and support. The care provided for the most vulnerable is outstanding. Through a well-thought-out personal, social and health education programme, pupils visibly grow in confidence and begin to take charge of their own lives. They have an outstanding awareness of keeping healthy, putting their knowledge into practice, for example, when planning nutritious meals. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their behaviour is good.

The leadership team has come together very successfully and further effective teams have been formed for the management of the different age groups. Appropriate structures and effective communication ensure all adults feel part of the team. School self-evaluation is accurate and includes all members of staff. Leaders know what the school does well and what is needed to raise achievement and are taking the steps necessary to do so. This gives good capacity to move the school forward.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching, and raise it to at least good by:
 - making better use of support staff
 - ensuring individual education plans are displayed according to school policy and that targets are used in lessons to further achievement
 - consistently using real objects and sensory activities to make learning meaningful for pupils with more profound needs
 - evaluating what pupils have learned in each lesson and using the information to plan the next steps in learning.

- Raise the achievement of pupils with complex needs and communication difficulties by :
 - professional training to ensure all adults are familiar with the strategies to be used with each pupil
 - ensuring routines communicated to pupils are adhered to
 - ensuring staff use pupils' preferred methods of communication such as signs and symbols consistently.

- Ensure all staff embrace the philosophy, systems and structures that have been introduced, contributing to and building on these when establishing the future direction of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy attending school. They are proud of their achievements especially the 'eco' work they do. Pupils persevere to give of their best. This was clearly evident when in literacy, for example, pupils with considerable needs clapped their hands with delight as they arranged the letters of the alphabet in the correct order. Equally, more-able pupils were thrilled to set up their own investigation into vegetable dyes, their eyes glued to the equipment, elated as the water in the flask changed colour.

From a low starting point, as a result of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils make satisfactory progress. They make similar rates of progress in numeracy and literacy. The progress of pupils with more profound needs slows in lessons where there is too little use of real objects and sensory activities so learning is not meaningful to them. They endeavour to vocalise and make eye contact when addressed. Pupils with severe needs show stamina and determination. While their progress is satisfactory overall, they make good gains in self-care. Pupils who have moderate learning difficulties make the most progress because of the good level of challenge in the activities provided for them. Pupils with more complex needs and communication difficulties make better progress when they are with familiar adults who stick firmly to routines and who understand their particular and often very different needs. However, when routines are not kept to, the learning of these pupils

slows. Adults work with resolve to maintain the skill level and well-being of pupils with degenerative and life-limiting conditions. Every effort is made to include them in activities with adults being imaginative in adapting resources to meet individual needs. A range of accreditation has enabled pupils and students of all capabilities to leave school with nationally recognised awards. This has enabled all the 2011 leavers to move on to further education or training. Pupils who have a gift or talent have been identified and developed with the result that some pupils have competed at national level in dance and athletics.

Pupils' attendance is average. They are well behaved and their positive attitude contributes well to learning. Pupils persevere even when things are difficult, overcoming barriers such as chronic health conditions, mobility difficulties and communication needs to make the best of every opportunity. They care about each other and help each other out, for example when becoming overwhelmed by the noise when eating in the main dining room. Pupils of all ages respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, older pupils and students commenting on how jobs, such as being a sport leader, prepare them well for life after school. Pupils' personal development is effectively promoted at break and lunchtimes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

There are many strengths in the quality of teaching. Classrooms are organised and well managed, planning is to a common format and opportunities are taken to promote pupils' personal development. Teachers endeavour to make learning fun. Teachers and support staff have brought a wide range of skills to the school. However, despite considerable training, some adults lack confidence in supporting learning, particularly when working with pupils with more complex needs and communication difficulties. The strategies observed during lessons were not always the most appropriate and sometimes left pupils confused. Routines were not adhered to so, for example, at the end of a lesson, pupils were not taken through 'transition'

¹The 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.

to the next lesson and were confused and disturbed. This limits the learning of these pupils. While some staff use signing and symbols effectively to fully include pupils with communication difficulties in lessons and to further their learning, others lack such skills and so too many opportunities were overlooked.

In the most successful lessons, pupils' individual education plans are prominently displayed and targets are referred to by staff to accelerate learning in each lesson. However, in some lessons, little account is taken of these targets. Similarly, there is inconsistency in the use of support staff. In the best lessons, support staff are knowledgeable and use their skills well to promote the learning of individuals or groups of pupils. In other lessons, however, support staff are too directive or just sit alongside pupils uncertain of their role. Effective teacher evaluation of pupils' learning at the end of each lesson is equally variable, as is using the information to plan the next steps in learning.

The curriculum has only been in its present form for a number of weeks and it is too early to see the impact. Nevertheless, it offers considerable flexibility for staff and pupils. Long term planning is in place and discussions are well under way to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move between key stages. The curriculum is enhanced by a wealth of clubs and experiences which contribute to sporting achievement and pure enjoyment. Though together for just a short time, quality experiences with the co-located school are already underway in music and science with plans for other subjects. The revised accreditation for older pupils offers greater challenge and a far wider range of subjects and awards that will count towards meaningful routes after school.

Pupils in all age groups are known and respected as individuals. Links with other agencies and health professionals are efficient and effective. This is especially important as all pupils are known to at least one agency, with the most vulnerable having dealings with as many as 12. Adults play a crucial role in ensuring the welfare of all pupils and where necessary, working alongside parents and carers to improve attendance. Leaders recognise, however, a handful of parents and carers are still coming to terms with the new school. Considerable efforts go into maintaining the well-being of pupils with degenerative and life-limiting conditions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteachers have made a considerable impact on the school. Despite all the difficulties presented in the starting up of a new school and a new building, they have had a tremendous impact on the smooth running of a purposeful environment. They successfully managed the move to the new premises with minimum disruption to learning. The move necessitated the redistribution of

managerial responsibilities and ensuing professional training. These have been welcomed by the majority of staff. Most staff have a good understanding of the school's current priorities; however, some have not yet reached this stage. Subject leaders are now clear about their roles and have produced plans to show how achievement will be raised. The introduction of robust systems to record and track pupils' progress is beginning to impact on learning.

Governance is satisfactory. Of necessity, much of the governing body's time has been taken up by external matters related to finance, the disappointment of the postponed date for the move to the new premises, and the numerous snags presented by the new build. The planning and application for Special Academy status has also necessarily required governors' close attention and all this has left little time for them to use their considerable skills in holding the school to account. Ongoing problems with the IT system are causing very significant problems for office administration and in the classrooms. Safeguarding and recruitment procedures are good and are reviewed and updated regularly, as are those for child protection. Adults are dedicated to ensuring the safety of these vulnerable pupils and their families. Community cohesion is satisfactory. Leaders are very aware of the make-up of the school's population and are committed to ensuring a coherent school community before expanding to the neighbourhood and wider community. Adults endeavour to include all pupils in all activities, but weaknesses in staff knowledge when working with certain groups makes equality of opportunity satisfactory.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form moved into their new accommodation at the start of the school year and are still familiarising themselves with the facilities and the new courses. Achievement is satisfactory. Links with local colleges enable most students to work towards nationally recognised awards in catering, horticulture, or sport and active leisure. Very good resources have been set up for the catering. The course is underway and students are making good progress in gaining new skills as well as in their understanding of health and safety. Similarly, the sporting element of the leisure course is up and running but, despite the efforts of leaders, the resources for horticulture such as the polytunnel and raised beds are still under construction.

Students continue to work towards numeracy and literacy awards, though having just one lesson each week limits the levels they can attain. A well-thought-out programme for independence training prepares students well for life after school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders are clear about how students who learn more quickly will use the resource but are still developing opportunities for those with more profound or complex needs, particularly as the building presents difficulties for wheelchair users.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Only a small proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They particularly appreciate the hard work of the headteacher and staff in minimising the impact of the uncertainty over the past 18 months, and the upheaval of the move. Quite a few mentioned their children’s vulnerability in such a large school. Inspection findings endorse parents and carers positive comments. In response to their concerns, very good care is taken to ensure that while pupils gain as much independence as possible, none is put at risk.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfield 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	56	7	22	3	9	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	19	59	11	34	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	34	17	53	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	31	13	41	2	6	2	6
The teaching is good at this school	15	47	13	41	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	34	10	31	8	25	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	38	17	53	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)	8	25	16	50	3	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	31	17	53	2	6	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	34	13	41	3	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	22	19	59	4	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	34	15	47	2	6	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	38	16	50	3	9	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	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 is 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.



30 September 2011

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Southfield School, Bradford, BD5 9ET

As you are aware, a little while ago two colleagues and I spent a short time looking at your school. We really enjoyed your company. Thank you for taking time to talk to us about your work, and for giving us your views of school. It was clear from our discussions and the questionnaire replies we received from your parents and carers that you enjoy school and think that you are well cared for. You certainly impressed us with your knowledge of keeping healthy.

You have only recently moved into your new building so many things are very new to both you and your teachers. Your leaders are working hard to make the new school a success. Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, but as you and your teachers are becoming more settled, the pace of your learning is picking up. You work hard, are well behaved and enjoy lessons. Many of you are already enjoying mixing with your peers from Grange.

Here are some areas that would make your school more successful.

- We need to see good teaching in all lessons, especially in the way support staff help you, and in the use of your individual education plans.
- More training is needed for some of the adults who work with those of you who have more complex needs and communication difficulties.
- Adults have coped well with the move, but now need to think how the school will develop.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax
Lead inspector

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