

# Heathfield Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	116607
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379273
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sonja Joseph

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	109
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tina Woodcock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Cunningham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Oldbury Way Fareham Hampshire PO14 3BN
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	13–14 June 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph

Additional inspector

Barry Wood

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited thirteen lessons and observed nine teachers. Over one third of lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. In addition, a learning walk was undertaken with both the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans and data on the pupils' academic progress and their behaviour. Inspectors reviewed the information provided by parents and carers in 31 completed questionnaires. The views of pupils and staff in returned questionnaires were also taken into account.

## Information about the school

Heathfield is a smaller than the average-size special school. It caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs that include profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder and severe and moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection increasing proportions of pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A number of pupils also experience physical and sensory difficulties and a small proportion has specific medical needs. The proportion of pupils from ethnic groups other than White British is average, and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school runs a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. An outside provider runs an after-school club which did not form part of this inspection.

The Heathfield outreach programme provides support to mainstream schools, their pupils and families.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Heathfield is a good school. The school’s excellent partnership with parents and carers ensures, as one parent commented, ‘They support us as well as our children’. The complex behavioural and other special educational needs of learners are effectively met. The school is not outstanding because of some remaining weaknesses in teaching and in some aspects of leadership and management.
- Achievement is good and all groups make equally good progress because the school caters effectively for the wide range of pupils’ needs and pupils have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers provide pupils with activities that engage their interest and keep them on track. They make good progress across a broad range of subjects. On occasion, learning objectives are not clear and lesson activities do not fully match the needs of all pupils; questioning is not used consistently to improve learning and the pace of lessons is not consistently challenging.
- Pupils behave well. They are typically considerate, respectful and courteous to staff, visitors and each other. There are occasions when the behaviour of a small number of pupils falls below expected levels. These incidents are managed well as a result of effective behaviour management systems which are understood well by pupils and supported by families due to the effective family support worker.
- The committed headteacher, staff and governing body lead and manage the school well. Systems for self-evaluation provide an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Teaching is led well and the management of performance is effective and increasingly rigorous. However, whole school tracking systems do not show pupils’ progress over time with sufficient clarity, and middle leaders are not sufficiently skilled in using performance data. The promotion of pupils’

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spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding, for example through the school's focus on the development of social and independence skills.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by July 2013, through:
  - ensuring that lesson activities fully meet the needs of all pupils, with clear learning objectives set for all lessons
  - making more incisive use of questioning to test and probe pupils' knowledge and understanding
  - ensuring better pace in parts of some lessons.
- Improve further the rigour of leaders' self-evaluation by:
  - refining the system for tracking pupils' progress over time in order to enable leaders to analyse more effectively the performance of pupils overall and in individual subjects
  - develop the ability of middle leaders in particular to use performance data more effectively in evaluating provision in their subjects.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment remains low during their time at the school. However, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points irrespective of their special educational needs or disabilities. All groups of pupils make similarly good progress, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their communication skills, because of staff expertise in using and encouraging the use of a wide range of strategies and skills including signing, augmentative aids and the use of pictures, symbols, signs and objects of reference to enable pupils to communicate. This, in turn, improves pupils' concentration, motivation and behaviour. Pupils also make particularly good progress in acquiring skills to work independently and with each other. In a particularly effective art lesson pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills as they debated the merits of particular designs for a pond.

Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively, to make choices; they develop their mathematical knowledge of shape and measuring to scale through using ICT to design different shapes. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children thoroughly enjoyed a session in which they learned to take turns, make choices and interact with other children. They made good progress towards their individual communication targets during the session because they were highly motivated by finding out 'What's in the bag?' Consequently, they developed their knowledge of the sounds letters make. Learning and progress are slower when activities, including the use of questioning, are not sufficiently challenging for all

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pupils.

Pupils make good progress in reading from their individual starting points, although their attainment by Years 2 and 6 remains low. Nearly all parents and carers say they are pleased with their children's progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is consistently good over time, and sometimes outstanding, across all key stages. This enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve. One pupil commented, 'We get fun things to do.' Teaching is typically lively and imaginative. Staff know pupils well and relationships between staff and pupils are positive and focused on enabling them to achieve as well as they can, by reducing their barriers to learning.

Teaching effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are placed in small groups for much of their work which enables them to develop their confidence and their social and communication skills. They are given praise and recognition for their successes and are encouraged to be as independent as possible. The individualised teaching approaches help pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning, including learning to read. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with excellent opportunities to share, take responsibility and learn collaboratively. For example, in an outstanding play therapy lesson, pupils were encouraged to develop their life skills through running an ice-cream parlour and stall selling 'sale items'. Pupils were enabled to enhance their economic awareness through the development of a price structure. This led to lively pupil discussions over appropriate charging and prices set as 'too high'. There is a strong focus on the use of sensory-based activities to stimulate pupils' interests. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoyed a lesson on cutting fruit and vegetables where they were able to feel the insides, find seeds and discriminate using their sense of smell. Equally, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoyed using jelly to explore textures, colour and shape discrimination and all were enabled to communicate their responses. The teaching of reading has improved, including more effective teaching of letter sounds and word recognition to younger pupils and the use of real life examples to motivate older pupils.

On occasions, the pace of some lessons is not quick enough, particularly in sessions such as circle activities, where pupils have to wait too long for their turn and can lose interest. In a few lessons it is not always clear what pupils are expected to learn from the tasks set and the tasks themselves do not fully match the needs of all pupils. In these lessons, the use of questioning is satisfactory but often does not explore pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently so that there are missed opportunities for pupils to recall aspects of their learning in the lesson.

Most parents and carers say teaching is good and a large proportion of the pupils agree.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour and safety were judged as good at the previous inspection and have remained so typically over time. Evidence to support this can be seen in the views of parents and carers who are highly positive about behaviour and safety, although some acknowledge occasional disruption of learning in lessons. Pupils who can communicate verbally report that they feel very safe and that adults are always there for them if they have any concerns. None reported any issues with any forms of bullying, including prejudicial bullying.

Pupils are very aware of right and wrong and know how to keep themselves safe. Breakfast club, lunch and snack times reflect the very positive relationships that pupils have with each other and with staff. These times enable pupils to develop their social and personal skills extremely well and contribute to the calming ethos that the school promotes. The intimate care plans for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. The school has made key appointments to address the changing profile of the school's intake. For example, the engagement of three emotional literacy support advisers has had a significant impact on improving pupils' behaviour and the appointment of a parent family support worker has ensured a consistent approach to communication between school and home.

Staff have undergone significant training to ensure that pupils' behaviour is managed effectively and safely. Inspectors noted that pupils are at ease in school, and show no fear or anxiety when those with challenging behaviour occasionally react adversely. Fixed-term exclusions are rare and incidents of restraint have decreased. Pupils' attendance is average as, for some, poor health affects their attendance. The school has excellent partnerships with parents through outreach, to ensure that those pupils who have absences due to their medical needs are supported on their return to school.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher's inclusive style of leadership has helped pupils, staff and parents develop a strong sense of pride in their school. This positive ethos ensures that all pupils are included in the life of the school, whatever their capabilities, and are encouraged to succeed.

Leaders at all levels demonstrate high expectations and a strong commitment to improving the school. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed, including improving progress in science. Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning thoroughly and there is an effective programme of professional development linked to needs and whole school priorities. As a result, good teaching and learning have been sustained at a time when the range and complexity of the needs of those joining the school has increased. Leaders acknowledge that there are, however, remaining weaknesses in a small minority of the teaching. Good

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achievement and behaviour and safety have also been sustained and increasing numbers of pupils are achieving at higher levels. Consequently, the school has a strong capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff are clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. The school is effective in tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. It ensures that all groups achieve equally well. It uses progress data effectively to identify the need for intervention programmes for individual pupils at particular points in time. However, current systems do not readily provide clear information on pupils' progress over time. In addition, middle leaders do not make sufficient use of progress data to test the success of provision in their subject areas.

The broad, balanced curriculum is good and has been made more relevant and personal to the pupils following a recent review, to ensure that all are provided with personalised learning pathways. A very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including clubs and out-of-school visits, is provided and these add to pupils' enjoyment of school. These contribute extremely successfully to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The governing body, through its committees and regular visits, monitors pupils' achievement carefully and challenges appropriately.

Rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils, such as the vetting of adults, meet requirements fully, are reviewed regularly and are effective. The engagement with parents and carers is very strong and well established with extended services providing a very effective network of support.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



15 June 2012

Dear Children

### **Inspection of Heathfield Special School, Fareham, PO14 3BN**

Thank you for your kindness and hospitality when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting so many of you and looking at your work. Because many of you feel your school is good you will not be surprised to know that we have judged your school to be good. You are well taught and well looked after and you make good progress in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.

Your school is an improving one. Much of this is due to the good leadership and management of the headteacher and the hard-working team of staff. It is clear that all are determined to support you and enable you to achieve.

To be even better, we have asked your leaders to:.

- make sure that activities in lessons are always suited to your individual needs and that teachers make it clear what they expect you to learn in lessons
- make sure that you have plenty of opportunities to answer questions and that lessons always proceed at a good pace, to keep you interested and challenged
- look more carefully at how well each of you are making progress.

You can help by always trying your best and by continuing to work hard in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph  
Lead inspector

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