

# Kestrel House School

104 Crouch Hill, Crouch End, London, N8 9EA

## Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- The leadership and management provided by the proprietor and the new headteacher are outstanding. They have a very strong commitment to improving outcomes for pupils.
- School improvement is effective, particularly in ensuring that past regulatory failures have been rectified. The quality of teaching has improved considerably and pupils' achievement has accelerated since the last inspection.
- The pupils are assessed well when they enter the school and, through regular assessment, good teaching and an effective individualised curriculum which meets pupils' specific learning needs, they make good progress in lessons and over time.
- The pupils thrive in the orderly, supportive environment, which successfully develops individuals' self-confidence and self-esteem. The older pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and adult life.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have built up positive relationships with the staff who care for them very well. The arrangements for their welfare, health and safety are outstanding.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Improvements are still needed in the teaching of science because teachers have not yet found a way of helping pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) to access the more abstract concepts.
- The number of accredited courses for the older pupils is limited.
- The monitoring of teaching and evaluation of classroom practice is relatively new and needs refinement to raise the quality of teaching still further.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.

The inspector observed 10 lessons, or therapeutic sessions, taught by five different teachers, looked at pupils' work, and held meetings with the proprietor, staff and groups of pupils.

The school's documentation was examined.

The views of both pupils and parents and carers were taken into account. The responses from Parent View were not accessed, due to the small number. Responses to the Ofsted questionnaires from all the staff were scrutinised.

The proprietor requested a material change to reduce the number of pupils from 50 to 30 and change the age range from 3–16 years to 5–16 years. The request was considered during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Kestrel House School is an independent special school, which was registered in September 2008. It is located in a large detached former stage school in a residential area of north London.
- There are currently 16 pupils on roll, nearly all of which are boys. All have statements of special educational needs related to autistic spectrum disorders, although some have additional learning and behavioural needs. Some have experienced significant periods out of full-time education prior to attending this school. Local authorities in London and the Home Counties refer all of the pupils. The proprietor is Acorn Care and Education. The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's first inspection was in December 2009. Two subsequent progress monitoring visits were made in September 2010 and February 2011 to check the progress the school had made in implementing its action plan.
- The new headteacher took up her post five terms ago.
- The school's aim is to value, support and empower individuals with autism to reach their full potential in life through multi disciplinary intervention and personalised education'.

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

- To raise achievement still further:
  - improve the quality of the monitoring of teaching, particularly by focusing more on the outcomes for pupils
  - improve the quality of teaching in science so as to help pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) to access the more abstract concepts.
- Increase the means of accreditation for the older pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Achievement is good for all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils join the school with basic skills that are typically below or well below national expectations for their age, mostly due to their specific autistic needs and also some have not been attending school for some time, which has adversely affected their attainment. The school checks on pupils' progress very regularly and adapts the curriculum to respond to individuals' changing needs and circumstances.

The pupils benefit from the good teaching and effective support and guidance. There is a high staff to pupil ratio, and specialist support from the multi-disciplinary team of speech and language and occupational therapist, and assistant psychologist is of good quality. As a result, all pupils make good progress, both academically and in their personal development over time, in relation to their original starting points.

In English and mathematics, pupils make good progress, and good quality, functional life-skills work prepares pupils well for future adult life. Pupils make particularly good progress in information and communication technology. Pupils enjoy using computers because learning is visual and individual and no social interaction is needed. In science, the pupils are making overall good progress but some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) find it more difficult to access the more abstract concepts. Older pupils leave with some accreditation, such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The school has identified the need for additional accreditation as an area for development. Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress that their children are making.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good overall. However, behaviour alone is outstanding. Pupils manage themselves outstandingly well in all that they do, which greatly supports their learning. Older pupils say that they have developed a lot through being at the school. They think that they control their own behaviour better and made comments such as, 'I am really happy here...the staff understand you, this school gives you the sort of help you need.' Pupils understand the meaning of bullying and say it does not happen at this school. None was observed during the inspection.

The quality and effectiveness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy school life. The positive staff team support them well in their personal development; they know the pupils very well and treat them with dignity and respect. Pupils' engagement in education, their attitude to learning and their relationships with staff and each other are good, and much improved. Their attendance is good. The school can demonstrate exceptional progress for pupils with autism in managing their anger and anti-social behaviour as a result of a well-devised and implemented whole-staff approach matched to individuals' specific needs.

Pupils are suitably introduced to the beauty of the world around them through the thematic curriculum. They hear stories from the Bible; for example, the story of Noah and the flood was used as a learning tool in an English lesson for older pupils, some of who were capable of retelling parts of the story. Racial harmony is promoted effectively. The staff and pupils are from different backgrounds, and various religious and cultural festivals are celebrated during the year. Such work helps pupils gain an understanding of their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance. The school suitably provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public services and institutions in England. The school is a sociable place, and events such as charity fun days

help promote cohesion and a sense of community. Some pupils play together in the playground. This is a significant step for pupils with autism who find social communication challenging. Pupils gain a good understanding of right and wrong with the staff acting as excellent role models, particularly for behaviour and conduct. The pupils who are able to do so respond well to the positive rewards system. Their individual achievements are regularly celebrated through assemblies and successes are routinely communicated to parents and carers.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

Teaching and assessment are good in all years and their quality has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' specific learning needs are assessed effectively on entry and the information gained from these assessments is used to provide a bespoke learning programme for each individual. The school effectively uses the national progression guidance to inform the attainment judgements. The staff are well informed about the specific needs of autistic pupils and use their secure knowledge and understanding of autism when planning lessons.

Planning details what activities each pupil will engage in and what they will learn. The planning has improved recently due to the monitoring of teaching and the increased emphasis on the curriculum matching individuals' needs. A positive contributory factor, enabling pupils to make good gains in their learning, is the combined work of the multi-disciplinary team working alongside the teaching staff. There is a positive learning atmosphere in the classrooms, and pupils are free from distraction and consequently they focus and settle well to their allotted tasks. The lesson objectives are shared with the pupils, who, through various means of communication, are enabled to know what must be achieved.

Staff use various communication aids, including picture symbols, gestures and visual aids, to warn the pupils when an activity will be complete; this helps the pupils to be ready for a change of task. The learning tasks are interesting; they match each pupil's individual attention span and are a mix of both practical and more academic tasks. The older pupils have more formal lessons such as English and mathematics, while younger pupils are given more individual learning tasks to complete. The youngest children get a suitable balance of activities. Staff have high expectations. Pupils respond by mostly engaging in the tasks set willingly, indicating when they would like to change, and show clear enjoyment.

The pupils have access to movement sessions as part of their daily routine and they have physical education lessons on site, such as dance and gymnastics, which help to improve their physical skills. The local community is used well for outside activities such as rock climbing and swimming. Sensory opportunities and activities are timetabled and the pupils enjoy these very much. For example, pupils used the bubble tube and enjoyed changing the colours, which helped them to settle ready for their next activity.

Staff communicate well, and very regularly, with parents and carers through the communication book, by telephone and email. This helps to support the parents and carers in assisting their children at home and reinforcing the work that they have done at school.

### Quality of curriculum

**Good**

The quality of the curriculum is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. It is well documented, based on National Curriculum guidance, and provides clear guidance for staff to enable them to meet pupils' specific needs and to make good progress. The curriculum is designed to fulfil the requirements specified in individuals' statements of special educational needs. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication and social interaction skills and their basic literacy and numeracy.

The specialist curriculum is designed to address the needs of autistic pupils and encompasses key

areas of learning for pupils on the autistic spectrum, particularly sensory, emotional, communication, social interaction and behaviour improvement. Effective use is made of pictorial communication systems to support learning and to enable pupils to access the activities provided. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is based on learning through play, with learning undertaken indoors and outside. All areas of learning are taught, with high priority given to developing children's basic skills and improving their behaviour. Some national awards are undertaken by some older pupils, but work that is accredited is limited. The school has identified the need to extend this accreditation to meet the needs of the pupils more effectively.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education is taught weekly, is firmly embedded into school life and is effective. The school has established links with careers advisors. The older pupils undertake some internal work experience currently and the school plans to extend this to external providers. As part of his work experience, an older pupil was very busy during the inspection planning activities for a charity day where the staff dress up in red and the pupils prepare lunch. The school develops pupils' awareness of life outside school and they make frequent local trips to the shops and library. Pupils make good timetabled use of the community for sporting activities including trampolining and horse riding.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

### **Outstanding**

Provision for all pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All welfare requirements are met in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding arrangements are very robust. The school has correctly checked the suitability of staff and others to confirm their suitability to work with children. All of the required information is recorded in the single central register. The designated persons responsible for safeguarding have been trained to the required level and all staff have been appropriately trained in child protection. The school has devised and effectively implemented the required range of health and safety policies, which take account of the latest national guidance, including those for child protection, anti-bullying and behaviour. Anti-bullying procedures are effective. There is no evidence of any bullying and pupils are free from harassment. Pupils are always very well supervised at all times. Pupils feel safe because staff care for them well and teach them how to keep themselves safe. Risk assessments are very robust. Procedures to prevent fire are rigorously implemented. All of the necessary checks are regularly undertaken, including those for fire safety and for all portable electrical equipment. The outcomes of checks are formally recorded and action is taken when appropriate. Good quality risk assessment ensures the safety of pupils on off-site visits. Pupils are developing an understanding of what constitutes healthy lifestyles and have daily opportunities for exercise both at school and at local off-site centres.

### **Leadership and management**

### **Outstanding**

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Under the determined leadership of the new headteacher, the staff and multi-disciplinary team are strongly dedicated to securing good or better outcomes for all pupils. They have high expectations and have created a positive ethos in the school that fosters the pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. They have made great strides particularly in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and behaviour. Numerous regulations were failed at the last inspection and these have been rectified effectively.

The headteacher and management have put in place new comprehensive systems to support the curriculum, teaching and welfare, health and safety and have built up a positive relationship with both staff and parents and carers. Staff have high expectations, work hard and place the needs of the pupils first. They are supported very well by the new headteacher, who has performance-managed them and they have regular opportunities for professional development. She has begun a programme of monitoring teaching and this has already shown improvements in raising the quality of teaching and learning. It is successful but still needs refinement by focusing more on outcomes for pupils. This is required if the monitoring is to raise the quality of teaching to outstanding. Staff,

through their questionnaire responses, demonstrate a high level of agreement with the aims, purpose and quality of what the leaders have done for them. The headteacher has devised an excellent school improvement plan and has begun to implement it.

The proprietor has made considerable investment into the school. This includes a new purpose-built outdoor learning environment where the pupils can develop their physical skills. The website and prospectus ensure that all of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents, carers and others. The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

The proprietor has ensured that all independent school regulations are met.

The material change is recommended. The premises will accommodate 30 pupils and the quality of teaching, curriculum and level of staffing expertise is appropriate for five to 16 year olds.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135683
<b>Inspection number</b>	408736
<b>DfE registration number</b>	309/6002
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School status</b>	Independent School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	16
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Page
<b>Headteacher</b>	Adrienne Wright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 December 2009
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£53,490
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8348 8500
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8348 1157
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