

Hazel Court School

Larkspur Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN23 8EJ

Inspection dates 3-4 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and as a result, pupils' progress is uneven across the school.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, especially those on free school meals, are not doing as well as other pupils.
- The school has not kept accurate records of pupils' Key Stage 2 achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and there is too little evidence gathered on pupils' current achievement in class to inform next steps.
- Teachers' expectations are too low and do not challenge more able pupils and pupils with moderate learning difficulties enough and sometimes work set is too easy.
- Pupils' reading is not developing well especially for the more able, because the school does not have a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics (the sound that letters make).
- Not enough time is allocated to the explicit teaching of reading, writing and mathematics on the school's daily pupil timetable.
- Teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to practice their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in a range of other subjects.
- Leaders and managers do not always set challenging and realistic targets for all pupils. As a result, the learning of pupils is not always checked against national expectations of progress in the Secondary.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils benefit from well planned and managed behaviour routines that run through the whole day. As a result, pupils are eager to learn, engage and enjoy their lessons and attendance is above average.
- The school provides well for the development of communication and listening skills of pupils with profound learning difficulties and pupils on the autistic spectrum, so that they make good progress.
- The Further Education (FE) Department is good. Majority of students develop independent life skills through a wide range of qualifications that prepares them well for their next stage in life.
- The senior leadership team and governors have moved the school forward more rapidly in the last year by building a strong team of committed teachers and parents. As a result, the school meets the physical and social, moral, cultural and spiritual needs of pupils and their development of independent and self-regulatory skills is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons all of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body. A phone conversation was held with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), written correspondences from three parents, the school's parent survey records and 32 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including nationally published information on pupils' achievement and the school's own data, local authority review reports, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, and records and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hazel Court School is a special school organised into two distinctly separate phases and situated on two sites that are three and a half miles apart.
- Hazel Court Secondary School (Secondary) for pupils aged 11 to 16 is co-located with The Causeway School, while Hazel Court School Further Education (FE) Department for students aged 16 to 19 is co-located with Sussex Downs College. Both phases are run by the same Governing Body, headteacher and deputy with a senior teacher in charge on each site.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a period of turbulence with major changes. The headteacher and deputy were appointed substantively to their posts in April, 2013. A quarter of teachers are less than a month in their new post. The Chair, though an experienced and longstanding member of the Governing Body, was appointed only last week.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- Less than a quarter of the pupils are girls. The rest are boys.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is slightly above the national average.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils have Profound Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Moderate Learning difficulties (MLD). Several pupils are also on the Autistic spectrum (AS). A large proportion of pupils have underlying speech, language and communication difficulties and a few have motor skills difficulties.
- The school works in 'loose' partnership with six other special schools in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching especially in the Secondary, to consistently good for more able pupils, pupils with moderate learning difficulties and pupils on free school meals by ensuring that:
 - teachers expect pupils to work hard and set work that is challenging enough to meet their needs.
 - teachers consistently gather evidence to improve their knowledge of pupils' capabilities and use this to plan for their next stages of learning.
- Improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that more time is allocated to teaching of literacy and numeracy on class daily timetables.
 - ensuring that pupils have ample opportunities to practise these skills across all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that school leaders:
 - accurately record pupils' starting points in reading, writing and mathematics and set challenging but realistic targets
 - check the progress pupils are making, especially in the Secondary, towards targets for pupils that are derived from national information about expected progress
 - establish a consistent school approach to the learning of phonics and the development of reading skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make rapid progress over time, especially in the Secondary. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is still too slow.
- School's records showed that majority of pupils made expected progress but too few made more than expected progress, because teachers' expectations of what they could achieve was too low. Work seen in pupils' books confirms this.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow because enough time is not committed explicitly to the teaching of these subjects. For example, English and mathematics appeared only twice on a timetable of a Key Stage 3 mixed class for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties.
- School records also show that the gaps in achievement for pupils on free school meals widened in the last year, with no pupils making more than expected progress compared to other groups of pupils, despite the pupil premium funding allocation. However, a few pupils looked after by the local authority have made good progress in the last three years. The new senior leadership team and the chair of governors are developing systems for tracking the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Pupils with profound learning difficulties and some pupils with severe learning difficulties have continued to make good progress in the last three years. This is not so for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, because work set for them is often too easy.
- Progress in the Further Education (FE) Department is good. Pupils are expected to obtain a wide range of vocational qualifications. These lay emphasis on independent and life skills, including self-regulation where appropriate, and include literacy, numeracy and functional skills, as well as a wide variety of work experience opportunities which prepare pupils well for their next steps in life.
- Pupils on the autistic spectrum make good progress because they have dedicated classrooms, experienced teachers and adults as well as specialists that work with them one to one and in small groups for all their lessons. Consequently, they make good progress with their speaking, listening and signing skills and their behaviour is good.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as its quality is too inconsistent; as a result, rates of progress are not fast enough for too many pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently make good use of their knowledge of pupils' capabilities to plan for their next steps of learning and set work that is matched to pupils' needs and ability levels. For example, in one lesson in Secondary, focused on developing communication skills, the teacher used 'signing' effectively so severe learning difficulties pupils progressed well in their speaking and listening, whereas there were missed opportunities for more able pupils and pupils with moderate learning difficulties to progress in their reading and writing.
- Teachers do not gather enough evidence through good marking and comments on pupils' achievement in lessons to inform next steps in teaching and this reduces the pace of learning.
- Teaching of writing is improving at a slow pace for more able pupils because some teachers have only recently joined the school as newly qualified teachers. School leaders are aware of this and have a robust mentoring programme in place that allows them to shadow excellent teachers to improve their teaching.
- Teaching of phonics is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that pupils, especially the more able, can make good progress and catch up with similar aged pupils. This is because teachers adopt a variety of methods for teaching reading and gaps in development of skills are

missed.

- Teaching of numeracy to pupils with profound learning difficulties is good. In some lessons seen with pupils with profound learning difficulties, teachers planned well with good resources that use a sensory approach, in addition to familiar songs with rhythm and rhyme, to encourage pupils to use numbers. This was not the case with pupils on free school meals who were more able or had moderate learning difficulties.
- Teaching in the Further Education (FE) Department is generally good. The school has adopted several ways such as through cooking, music, art and dance to prepare pupils for their next steps in education. Pupils enjoy this approach and those that could, talked to inspectors about how well they are developing life skills through shopping, cooking and work experience.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. A positive climate for learning is established throughout the school at the start of everyday. In the Secondary, this takes the form of warm up physical exercises such as 'yoga'. Pupils were encouraged to show how well they could count, use new vocabulary or try new exercise positions.
- There are caring relationships established between staff and pupils which promote good attitudes to learning, even where work is not matched to the ability of the pupils.
- Clear classroom behaviour routines and targets ensure that children are ready to learn. For example, in a physical education lesson in the Further Education Department, pupils with severe learning difficulties were taught to take turns by passing a ball to each other.
- Pupils demonstrate good social skills. They have learnt to take turns and listen to one another and are respectful of adults and each other. They are polite and courteous to visitors. Some are confident speakers, especially in the Further Education (FE) Department and engage articulately in conversation with adults and other pupils. They are taught how to link facial and body expressions to feelings in special 'creativity' lessons designed for this purpose.
- Pupils understand the meaning of safety as well as e-safety and say they feel safe in school. The total numbers of incidents dropped this year and bullying is very rare. Almost all staff and parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire have confirmed this view.
- Skilful planning and use of resources such as hoists and specialised wheelchairs to help less mobile pupils and the strong contribution of additional adults has ensured that lessons are rarely disrupted due to the personal needs of pupils with physical disabilities.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not used assessment information well enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Consequently the quality of teaching and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics was not checked with a focus on the potential of pupils, since leaving primary school.
- This is an improving situation, however, and systems and procedures for monitoring and checking that assessment of pupils is rigorous, robust and accurate have been developed in the last year. Almost all pupils have now been given appropriate and demanding end of Key Stage targets.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and designed to meet the complex needs of most of its pupils. There is a range of extra-curricular opportunities which span the whole day and pupils enjoy and engage in them, so attendance is above average. However, senior teachers have not checked how teachers are covering numeracy and literacy skills in subjects other than English or mathematics and this contributes to slowing down of progress in reading, writing and

mathematics.

- The school's self-evaluation of its strengths is robust. However, the school's action plans need to focus more sharply on tackling areas requiring improvement. Leaders agreed with inspectors on the areas for improvement in the quality of teaching seen.
- Leaders at all levels are committed to the school's success. There is secure capacity for improvement, as shown in improvements identified in its area for development at the last inspection. For example, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils underpins the work of the school and pupils enjoy and celebrate the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom through art, music and dance. Also, the school is now part of a 'loose' partnership with six special schools to share good practice particularly in relation to the sharing of ideas on action plans.
- Since the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy the number of incidents has reduced because of the consistent close monitoring, checking and review of behaviour management policies. Behaviour is good both in the Secondary and Further Education (FE) Department and in lessons, teachers and other adults ensure that behaviour targets are met and reviewed regularly.
- The school benefits from the extended facilities which its co-location with The Causeway School and Sussex Downs College provides. For example, pupils in the Further Education (FE) Department are given the opportunity to learn to be more independent by eating lunch at least three times a week with students of Sussex Downs College.
- The school's engagement with parents is a strength of the school. The school encourages an 'open door policy' and has devised several strategies such as 'the report diary' to ensure parents have good opportunities to share information with the school. Pupils take daily information home to parents to let them know what they did in school. As a result, the behaviour of pupils continues to improve.
- Following on from the previous inspection, the local authority has provided 'light touch' support for the school in the form of three visits a year to support the areas of achievement and improvement to the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body have developed their capabilities by running systematic checks on all aspects of school life and undertaking relevant training. This enables all members to have a good grasp of the qualities of teaching and learning. They understand how performance management aligns to teachers' pay and the quality of their work.
 - The depth of information held by the governing body means that members are able to offer effective support and challenge to the headteacher and school. For example, they understand the strengths and weaknesses in the school self-evaluation especially in relation to the use of better target setting tools and software.
 - Governors understand the school's finances. They have supervised the spending of the pupil premium funding to buy communication devices such as the iPad, occupational therapist time and practical fine motor skills resources to assist writing. They know that the majority of pupils on free school meals with profound learning difficulties made good progress. A priority for the governing body this year is to increase the rates of progress for pupils on free school meals who are more able and have moderate learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties.
 - The governing body approved the continuous training of teaching assistants to convert to qualified teachers within a variety of specialist areas and this has strengthened the teaching team and reduced the need to use teachers from outside to cover when teachers are unavoidably absent.
 - Governors undertake regular checks to ensure that the school is a safe place. They contribute to the rigorous safeguarding procedures that ensure that the school meets all requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114694
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	426645
Type of school	All-through
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	87
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Tutt
Headteacher	Sophie Gurney
Date of previous school inspection	20-30 September 2010
Telephone number	01323 465720
Fax number	01323 740121
Email address	office@hazelcourt.e-sussex.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

