

Hopewell School (Harmony House)

Harmony House, Dagenham, RM9 6XN

Inspection dates 24–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Pupils achieve extremely well as a result of outstanding teaching. They make very rapid progress particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in their behaviour, attendance and personal development as a result of an exceptionally supportive ethos and excellent pastoral care.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The senior leaders are highly ambitious for the pupils and communicate their passion very effectively to the staff. They relentlessly focus on improving teaching and achievement to be the best it can be.
- The outstanding curriculum, in its therapeutic, academic and vocational strands, is tailor-made to pupils' individual needs because it is based on a wide range of diagnostic tests and is constantly reviewed.
- The outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is underpinned by a strong commitment to keeping pupils safe and teaching them how to keep safe.
- Placing authorities, parents, carers and pupils are extremely positive about the school and praise the rapid improvement in pupils' attendance, behaviour, attitudes to learning and progress. Pupils say that this the best school they have attended.

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

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed nine lessons jointly with the headteacher. These were taught by nine different teachers or tutors and included a reading session. She also held meetings with the proprietors, senior leaders, teaching staff and pupils; and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' welfare and academic progress.
- The inspector took account of the responses in 16 questionnaires completed by staff and the views of one local authority placing 17 pupils at the school. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey so the inspector held telephone conversations with five parents and carers to collect their views.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hopewell School (Harmony House) is an independent day special school which opened in November 2006 and was initially registered for 10 pupils aged from 11 to 16 years. It is now registered for 50 pupils aged from five to 18 years who have social, emotional, behavioural disorders (SEBD), moderate learning difficulties and/or needs associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).
- The school is situated in a residential area of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is housed in Harmony House which is a resource and conference centre. Harmony House is a charitable project of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary which provides services to the local community and for refugees. The school uses local facilities for swimming and a wide range of sports.
- The school had its last full inspection in February 2010. A material change inspection was conducted in March 2012.
- There are currently 37 pupils on roll aged between seven and 16 years, four of whom are girls. Some have specific language difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. All have social, emotional, behavioural disorders and significant difficulties with social interaction and communication skills. A small minority of pupils have needs associated with autistic spectrum disorder. There are 33 pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are placed by eight local authorities and 13 are looked after by their funding authority. There are six pupils in Key Stage 2, 13 in Key Stage 3, 17 in Key Stage 4, and one in post-16 education.
- The school's vision is 'restoring hope, releasing potential and rebuilding lives'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain pupils' outstanding academic achievement by:
 - improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants in lessons by developing their understanding of how pupils' literacy and numeracy skills can be extended and their expertise in doing so
 - making arrangements for the external moderation of all teachers' assessments to ensure their consistency and accuracy
 - implementing the proprietors' plan to set up a board of governors with a wide range of expertise to challenge the school even more robustly.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Pupils' achievement is outstanding, as a result of an exceptionally supportive ethos underpinned by the therapeutic strand of the curriculum, outstanding teaching and excellent pastoral care. Pupils join with a history of disrupted education and exclusion, some having missed months of education and others up to two years. As noted by parents, carers and placing authorities, pupils re-engage with education swiftly after joining the school because they are successfully helped to overcome their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is achieved through a school ethos centred on building very positive working relationships, and raising pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs, as well as the gaps they have in their knowledge and skills, are identified on entry through a rigorous assessment process, and this information is used to plan personalised programmes of education.

As a result of outstanding teaching and daily opportunities to apply their basic skills in most subjects, pupils, who typically join with levels of literacy and numeracy that are below those expected for their age, systematically recover lost ground in reading, writing and numeracy. Most make rapid progress in relation to their varying starting points, despite setbacks along the way for some, which are triggered by environmental factors. Pupils also make very good progress in their speaking, listening and social skills because small teaching groups provide a secure social structure within which pupils can rebuild trust and confidence, and teaching encourages both whole-class discussion and paired work. Pupils show sustained concentration in class and eagerness to achieve well. The more able take some GCSEs early at foundation level to build their confidence to achieve a good grade at the higher level the following year. Those who complete their education at the school leave with qualifications that enable them to find employment or a place at college. In addition, some pupils achieve the British Gymnastics Proficiency Awards.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils make outstanding progress in their behaviour and personal development, reflected in their good attendance, visible enjoyment of learning and outstanding achievement. Having joined the school with a history of poor or non-attendance, exclusion, disaffection and challenging behaviour, pupils thrive in a nurturing and calm environment. Their emotional well-being is promoted consistently well by staff who handle them with a well-considered mix of understanding and firmness. As a result, pupils' attendance and behaviour improve significantly soon after joining the school, and parents and carers report that their children's behaviour also improves greatly at home. Many pupils have 100% attendance. Pupils who have been out of education for a long period, or who could not cope with the social environment of a small class at once, are eased back into school life through an extremely effective outreach programme. The attendance of the very few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly improves over time as a result of close liaison between the school and parents, carers and outside agencies. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their education and participate actively in lessons and outdoor activities. Through the therapeutic strand of the curriculum and excellent pastoral care, pupils learn to express their emotions in a socially acceptable way and their behaviour is exemplary most of the time. Staff are skilful at de-escalating potentially volatile situations, and outbursts are rare. When they occur, they are managed extremely effectively, so that individuals are speedily re-engaged in learning and others are not disrupted. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and instances of bullying are rare.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is the result of the school's commitment to being a community centred on building relationships based on mutual respect. Pupils form very positive relationships with staff and peers of diverse cultural backgrounds and they are polite and considerate. They have daily opportunities to reflect on the way their behaviour affects their work and others, in lessons as well as in 'repair and rebuild'

sessions in which they explore what went well and how it could be even better. Their self-esteem and self-confidence are developed exceptionally well through praise for every measure of improvement, and opportunities to excel academically and in sports, and to participate in school productions. Pupils show that they are proud of their achievements and of their school. They learn about public institutions and how to discuss current issues without bias through lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). They practise democracy by voicing their views in weekly pupil forum meetings. Through the use of local facilities for sports, educational visits and work experience, they develop a practical awareness of what the local community has to offer. They gain very rich cultural and social experiences by supporting national and international charities, participating in 'cultural Friday' activities, and a wide range of educational visits including links with a Kenyan village and a trip to Ghana.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

Teaching is outstanding and enables almost all pupils to make excellent progress in most subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants establish very positive working relationships based on mutual respect and a shared understanding of strategies that work best to get the most out of individual pupils. Teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils and meet their differing needs precisely by asking questions and providing activities that are pitched at different levels and designed to challenge all pupils. Consequently, all pupils participate actively in lessons and make exceptional progress in their understanding of the subject matter. Teachers' planning is based on formal and informal assessments and shared with teaching assistants who usually support individual pupils very effectively. However, not all teaching assistants demonstrate a clear understanding of how to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills or sufficient expertise to do so. Teachers are very attentive to pupils' responses and change of moods and adjust the duration or sequence of activities as necessary to ensure continuous engagement. They consistently use praise and words of reassurance to boost pupils' confidence. They frequently check on pupils' learning and give them constructive verbal feedback to help them further improve their work. All teachers promote pupils' literacy skills consistently well through questioning, paired work and class discussion, and extend pupils' vocabulary by engaging them in defining key words. Nearly all teachers extend pupils' reading and writing skills equally effectively.

Assessment is thorough and much improved since the last inspection. However, while teachers' assessments are moderated internally, not all are also moderated externally to ensure their consistency and accuracy. Pupils gain a clear picture of what to do to improve through constructive marking and the use of curricular targets.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The outstanding curriculum is uniquely based on a tri-partite model made of therapeutic, academic and vocational strands. It enables pupils to make exceptional progress in their personal development and in their academic learning. On entry, pupils' needs are thoroughly assessed using a series of tests to identify the gaps they have in their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social and emotional profile, their levels of self-esteem and their preferred learning styles. These assessments form the basis of detailed individual educational and behaviour plans, which, along with well-structured medium-term plans in each subject, support the teaching very well to challenge all pupils. Initial assessments are also used very effectively to plan the grouping of pupils, the structure of their school day, and individualised recovery reading programmes. Termly assessments inform the review of educational and behaviour plans and the provision of additional support where dips in achievement have been identified. As a result, pupils overcome their personal barriers to learning, and they recover lost ground systematically which enables them to access full courses.

The curriculum includes all the required areas of learning. In Key Stages 1 to 3, it is based on the National Curriculum, suitably adapted to serve pupils' needs. Its breadth has improved since the

last inspection with the introduction of drama therapy, alternating with art therapy, and a wider range of GCSE and vocational options in Key Stage 4 and post 16. All pupils have discrete information and communication technology (ICT) lessons and they use ICT frequently in most subjects. Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils have access to a wide range of qualifications which match their abilities and equip them well for their future. The curriculum is very well balanced between academic learning and a wide range of physical and artistic activities that help pupils to discover new talents and develop their social skills. The school resources the curriculum creatively. A wide range of enrichment activities and educational visits supports pupils' social and cultural development extremely well.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) permeates the whole curriculum and is central to pupils' outstanding personal development. It is taught through discrete lessons, weekly assemblies and daily opportunities for pupils to reflect on their behaviour and their work. It is part and parcel of the therapeutic work of all staff throughout the school day. Pupils' social skills are fostered consistently through collaborative work and team games. Pupils have opportunities to develop leadership skills, for example by convening termly meetings with sister schools, making presentations, contributing to newsletters and participating in the recently introduced Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils receive exceptionally well-judged advice and support to make informed choices about their future.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding owing to the school's rigorous procedures and strong commitment to keeping pupils safe in all circumstances and teaching them how to keep themselves safe. All regulations are met. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that all adults working at the school are effectively vetted. The required checks are properly recorded in a single central register. All staff have the appropriate level of training in child protection. The detailed safeguarding policy supports them very effectively in this area. All the policies and procedures for anti-bullying, behaviour, first aid, health and safety, and fire safety are up to date and implemented consistently. All staff are trained in first aid. The school carries out all the regulatory fire safety checks in excess of basic requirements and there are two fire marshals. Attendance is monitored rigorously and, where it starts to decline, home visits are conducted by the home-school liaison coordinator and other staff, resulting in pupil re-engagement. Parents, carers and pupils have full confidence in the school's ability to keep children safe. Pupils feel safe because they are extremely well cared for by staff who know them very well as individuals and who create an inclusive community in which no-one is isolated. They learn to keep safe through PSHCE and practical activities such as swimming, cycling and using computers. In addition, they have opportunities to train in first aid, food hygiene, and health and safety in the workplace. Pupils are encouraged to eat and drink healthily and enjoy the wide range of physical activities on offer. They have the opportunity to work towards the British Gymnastics Proficiency Awards.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Leadership and management are outstanding and enable pupils to achieve extremely well. The school has succeeded in improving its provision while increasing its size. The proprietors ensure that the therapeutic education values that underpin the school ethos are adopted consistently by all adults working at the school. The senior leaders are highly ambitious for the pupils and communicate their passion very effectively to the staff. They relentlessly focus on improving teaching and demonstrate an excellent capacity to develop new teachers' skills to a good standard over a short period of time so that teaching overall is outstanding and enables pupils to achieve extremely well. The staff demonstrate that they fully adopt the culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice promoted by the leaders. Nearly all say that they are supported well in their professional development. The curriculum serves the academic, social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils outstandingly well and prepares them well for their future. Very effective programmes of reading recovery ensure that pupils can catch up quickly with good reading

standards and so access the curriculum fully. Personal, social, health and citizenship education, combined with exciting enrichment activities and a nurturing school ethos, contributes exceptionally well to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. Accurate self-evaluation informs the school's improvement work which is supported by rigorous management plans. The proprietors support the school's development by employing an external educational consultant to evaluate its performance and challenge the senior leaders. They have identified the need for even more robust challenge to the school and have chosen to set up a board of governors with a wide range of expertise to challenge the school for this purpose.

The proprietors ensure that all the regulations for independent schools are met. The premises provide safe and effective teaching accommodation. Parents, carers and placing authorities receive the full range of required information and feel well informed of pupils' progress. The complaints procedures meet requirements. Parents and carers are highly satisfied with the provision. One parent expressed the views of many when saying, 'The staff are doing a fantastic job. They have changed my life and my son's life.'

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

Unique reference number	134388
Inspection number	420231
DfE registration number	301/6002

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special school for pupils with social, emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEBD), moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Herman Allen
Headteacher	Dr Sharina Klaasens
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000 to £50,000
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