

Patcham House Special School

7 Old London Road, Patcham, Brighton, BN1 8XR

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is good, so that by the time they leave school in Year 11 they are well prepared for further education or training.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Adults in the classroom work well as teams.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. It is well managed, with very good relationships between adults and students. Students value the support they get from the adults, including their key worker and the opportunities they have to make friends with other students at the school.
- Leaders and governors have managed the transition to the federation well, using the change to underline their vision of a high-quality service, both within their own schools and further afield.
- The extensive and innovative curriculum that is offered to students in all years is a strength of the school, encouraging students to make good progress.
- Leaders and governors know the school well and use this knowledge to plan very effectively to meet the challenges the school has faced in the recent past and what it considers it will face in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding to ensure students make the best possible progress. Teachers are not yet consistently using the new technologies they have been provided with to accelerate students' progress.
- Students do not read widely enough and where they have difficulties with reading there is insufficient specifically targeted support to help them.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, most of them jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector heard students read and looked at students' work in books and on display around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other staff, three members of the governing body, four parents and carers including a parent governor and an officer from the local authority. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the headteacher of a local secondary school, which some students from Patcham House attend for some of their subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- The inspector reviewed the school's procedures for safeguarding, including risk assessments of a variety of activities. The inspector looked at leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the planning arising from that analysis. The inspector looked at the tracking of students' academic progress, their attendance records and school leaders' monitoring of teaching. The inspector looked at the school's recording of incidents of poor behaviour, including different forms of bullying.
- The inspector took account of the inspection questionnaire returned by nine members of staff. The inspector reviewed Parent View (the online questionnaire) but there were too few responses on the system to provide an analysis.

Inspection team

Timothy Feast, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Patcham House is a small school which provides for students with complex needs including students on the autistic spectrum continuum, students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and students with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs and are increasingly identified as having more than one difficulty or disability.
- A large majority of the students are boys and nearly all the students are from White British backgrounds.
- About two thirds of the students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is well above the national average. The pupil premium is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and those from service families; there were none from service families at the time of the inspection.
- The school has high levels of mobility. Over half the students join at times other than the normal admission time in Year 7. They usually come after their placements in mainstream schools have broken down. Some have been out of school for long periods of time.
- There are more students in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
- The school's curriculum for older students provides opportunities for students to study additional GCSE courses at a local secondary school and vocational courses at local colleges and alternative providers.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become part of a federation with two other local special schools. The federation has appointed an executive headteacher, who is a National Leader in Education. The establishment of the federation has led to a restructuring of governance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching so achievement is raised by:
 - improving the use teachers make of the new technologies at their disposal to make lessons more relevant to these students, so that their progress is rapid and sustained in all lessons
 - encouraging students to read more widely in and out of lessons and where necessary to provide tailored specific reading support to individual students, whose reading skills lag behind what is expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students usually enter the school at different ages and at different times of the school year. Their attainment on arrival is usually low, often because of their time out of schools.
- Students' attainment improves so that by the time they leave the school in Year 11 they gain a good range of academic and vocational qualifications and are well prepared for their next step, usually transferring to a further education college. The range and number of examination passes have improved since the last inspection.
- This improved attainment represents good progress from their starting points for all groups of students, with some students making outstanding progress. Observations in lessons and a review of the data of students currently in the school confirm that all groups, including the girls, more-able students and students eligible for the pupil premium in all year groups, make similarly good progress. Students with differing difficulties and disabilities make equally good progress.
- Year 7 students were seen making good progress with their social skills, participating in activities which required them to listen well and take turns appropriately. Year 10 students were seen making good progress with their understanding of properties of particles in a science lesson, helped by demonstration through a scientific experiment.
- The impact of courses offered at the local secondary school, local colleges and by an alternative provider is monitored effectively by school leaders to ensure that students are progressing well. Students enjoy these opportunities, achieve well and gain confidence from learning in other settings.
- Students do not read widely enough in lessons or in their own time to make optimum progress. Some students come to the school with very low reading skills and not enough is done on entry to accelerate their progress in this area through the systematic and regular use of recognised schemes and strategies.
- A high proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium. They make similar and sometimes better progress than students generally and their attainment in class and by the time they leave the school is at least on a par with the other students. Their progress is helped by the support they receive to involve them in innovative activities which enrich their experiences, and by the staff's high expectations which help to convince the students that they can achieve well. In 2012/13 the students in Year 7 made really good progress in catching up and narrowing the gap in working towards what is expected of them in their core skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parents and carers overwhelmingly indicated that they thought their children progress well while at the school, aided by the enormous support they receive from the members of staff.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good across subjects and year groups. In lessons jointly observed with senior leaders their judgements were accurate. The school's own monitoring of teaching shows good teaching over time and this is their current evaluation.
- All the adults in the classrooms have a good understanding of the nature of the difficulties faced by the students and work well as teams to remove barriers to learning. Staff work effectively where necessary to keep students focused on the tasks and what they are expected to learn.
- The school's resources for new technologies are very good but they are not yet being used consistently well to offer material that stimulates and challenges students and enables them to consistently demonstrate rapid progress.
- The generally good teaching results in students enjoying their lessons. The students told the inspector that they particularly enjoyed their opportunities to cook and to take part in different sports. Students in Year 9 really enjoyed the opportunity to cook vegetable soup, cutting the different vegetables with great care, looking forward to tasting the soup produced by other

students later in the lesson and taking the finished product home to be shared with others.

- Students' work is marked regularly and much good guidance is given to students on what they need to do to improve their work. Older students in particular knew the GCSE grades they were targeted to achieve and what they needed to do to meet the challenge and improve.
- Parents and carers were extremely positive in thinking that their children are taught well and particularly value the expert way in which their individual child's needs are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

is good

- Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and this contributes well to their good progress. They showed good progress with their ability to review each other's work in a Year 9 functional skills lesson where they were extending and enriching their vocabulary by drawing and then explaining their own home or a dream house. The headteacher of the local secondary school identified the students' positive attitudes as one of the contributory factors to their successful integration into examination classes in her school.
- The attendance of a majority of students improves while they are at the school, although overall the school's attendance is below that of secondary schools nationally. Absence is often related to some form of medical condition.
- Students sometimes become agitated or distressed while they are in lessons or around the school. The school has carefully considered procedures for tackling any such incidents and staff deal with them with great care and in line with the school's guidance. As a result students indicate that they have someone whom they can talk to if they have concerns and they are confident that an adult would sort any issues out. This positive approach to behaviour management in lessons results in other students being able to carry on with their work. Students value the rewards they receive for their good behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced considerably this academic year and the incidence of poor behaviour is relatively low.
- Students have a developing understanding of how to keep safe, for example in their capacity to travel on public transport independently. School records show that incidents of bullying of any nature are infrequent and students are clear that staff will deal with such incidents. Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe while at school and that the school takes the necessary precautions when taking their children off site.

The leadership and management

are good

- School leaders, including the governing body, are clearly ambitious for the future direction of the federation, including the role of Patcham House. Their planning is clearly focused on the challenges they face to turn this vision into reality, including accelerating the progress of students who come to the school with more challenging complex needs.
- School leaders, including the governing body, are accurate in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and these evaluations by governors are based on secure first-hand knowledge acquired through visits to the school.
- The establishment of the federation has meant that more responsibility has been devolved to middle leaders in the school. Unanimously they have bought into the ambitious vision for both the federation as a whole and for Patcham House School specifically. Their work, for example, in respect of safeguarding and in effectively sharing the school's expertise, illustrates their positive contribution to the school's work.
- The school has continued to build on the extensive opportunities to participate in a wide range of artistic, cultural, sporting and technological activities recognised at the last inspection and these opportunities contribute extremely positively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Students in a Year 10 lesson were debating the rights and wrongs of capital punishment as part of their programme of consideration of ethical questions. Younger students told the inspector how much they valued the Forest School and its contribution to their

personal development.

- The careful deployment of resources has led to targeted provision across the whole school and this has contributed effectively to promoting equal opportunity and tackling any discrimination.
- The school uses its allocation of funding from the pupil premium to good effect. Parents and carers are aware of how the funding is used and its impact, and the school's website provides comprehensive information about this area. Governors are also aware of the funding from the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up focus and are well aware of where, for both areas, it has had a positive impact.
- Senior leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching. Their judgements are accurate and the areas identified for improvement are appropriate but, as they acknowledge, too little teaching has moved from being consistently good to being outstanding. The governing body has adopted a pay and performance management policy taking into account new requirements and expectations. Pay progression is not automatic; consideration is given to the effectiveness of the teaching when making decisions.
- The local authority has provided resources to the school, for example, to support the purchase of new technologies and to improve the safety of the learning environment. This support is appropriate.
- Safeguarding and the well-being of the students and staff are at the heart of all the school does. Statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding are fully met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors' accurate knowledge of the school is demonstrated through the challenge they pose to school leaders at governing body meetings, for example, in respect of the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in 2012/13.
 - It is clear that the governing body has high expectations of the quality of provision that the federation will offer, not only to the students in its own schools but in support of colleagues in mainstream schools further afield. They are clear in their expectation of good performance in respect of teaching and implement rewards for good teaching and challenge and tackle any underperformance. Their involvement in all aspects of the school's work underpins the school's considerable capacity for improvement.

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	114679
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	426644

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Keegan
Headteacher	Gayle Adam, executive headteacher, Kim Bolton
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 September 2010
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