

High Park School

Thorn Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD9 6RY

Inspection dates

26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Pupils' overall achievement requires improvement because it varies too much. The progress made by pupils across the school and in all subjects is not consistently strong.
- Checks on pupils' understanding are not used well enough so some pupils' literacy skills are not developed as well as they could be.
- In some lessons adults do not give enough direction, guidance and support to encourage pupils to make the progress they are capable of.
- Teaching in general is not good enough. In some lessons time is wasted and pupils do not make enough progress because teachers do not provide enough learning activities to motivate all pupils to learn for the whole of the lesson.
- Leaders have not moved swiftly enough to improve the quality of teaching or to provide detailed information about how well all pupils and groups of pupils are progressing.
- Outstanding practice in some areas of the school is not used effectively to improve teaching elsewhere.
- Governors do not question leaders rigorously about the effectiveness of leaders' actions.
- Governors are not able to judge for themselves how well the school is doing because they do not use detailed information about the progress of individuals and groups of pupils effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they attend regularly and they feel safe.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Adults work tirelessly to ensure they respond to and communicate with pupils in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Well trained staff act quickly and effectively to support pupils when they are having difficulty managing their own behaviour.
- The movement of pupils from one activity to another is extremely well managed by adults so that learning time is not lost.
- Some teaching is outstanding because the fine balance between adult direction and pupil choice ensures all pupils make rapid progress.
- Effective provision for pupils in the sixth form ensures school leavers make a smooth transition into adult care services.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 teachers in 16 part lessons; one of these was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were conducted with the Chair of Governors, members of staff and two pupils. In addition telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and an external consultant employed by the school.
- Information from the scrutiny of a range of documentation provided by the school was used to help form inspection judgments. These documents included the school self-evaluation, action plan, records of the management of teachers' performance, assessment information and information relating to safeguarding.
- The views of parents were gathered from 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and two letters from parents that were sent to the lead inspector. In addition inspectors looked at the results of a recent survey of parents which was conducted by the school.
- An analysis of 19 responses to the staff questionnaire, along with discussions with staff during the inspection, gave inspectors an insight into the views of the staff.

Inspection team

Drew Crawshaw, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Katharine Halifax

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- High Park School is a school for children and young people with communication and interaction difficulties aged 3 to 19 years.
- High Park moved to its current site in September 2013.
- At the time of the inspection there were 95 pupils on roll.
- Pupils are admitted to the school at any time of the year.
- The proportion of girls to boys is low. There are approximately four boys for every one girl on roll.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is well above average (pupil premium funding is an additional grant given by the government to schools for those children who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from armed services families and children looked after by the local authority).
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of assessment.
- High Park employs a range of additional specialist staff including: two aroma therapists, an occupational therapist and a creative partner. It also purchases additional time from an educational psychologist and a speech and language therapist.
- The school works collaboratively with a range of partners including: Social Care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the School Nursing Team, the District Achievement Partnership and the Speech and Language Therapy Team.
- High Park provides a Learn and Play service to support children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to maintain their mainstream placement.
- The school holds a number of awards including: National Healthy School Status, The Gold Standard for Team Teach and The Inclusion Chartermark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement so that the progress they make is consistently good by:
 - ensuring all teachers create an effective balance between the way they direct and manage learning activities and the opportunities they give to pupils to make choices for themselves
 - increasing the number and variety of opportunities in lessons for pupils to make choices by making full use of all available space, including outdoor areas
 - sharing and adapting the good and outstanding practice already seen in some areas of the school
 - ensuring that teachers plan their lessons so they can identify clearly what individual pupils are expected to learn so even minute improvements made by pupils can be measured, recorded and celebrated.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring leaders act swiftly to implement planned improvements in the quality of teaching, for example by taking the opportunity to model good classroom practice
 - increasing the rigour by which leaders at all levels collect, analyse and use information about the progress pupils make across the school
 - making better use of systems to monitor the performance of staff, along with a targeted programme of continuing professional development, to ensure all staff perform at the level which is expected of them and take action swiftly if this is not the case

- ensuring the governing body regularly challenges leaders, evaluates the effectiveness of progress and is in a position to come to its own conclusions about how well the school is performing.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Based on their starting points and giving consideration to their considerable communication and interaction difficulties, too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in both their learning and personal development.
- Approximately one third of pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. The schools' assessment information indicates that the pace of pupils' progress varies from inadequate to outstanding for all age groups and across all subjects. This was confirmed by lesson observations, observing pupils' at playtime and lunch time and by looking at pupils' progress files.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make markedly better progress than their peers. The additional support provided for pupils who receive additional funding is used effectively to improve their rate of progress.
- Pupils' learning is more effective when activities in lessons are accurately matched to their individual needs and interests; consequently in these lessons pupils make good progress. For example many pupils in the sixth form make good progress in mathematics because activities such as using money are integrated into their running of a café. This prepares pupils well for their transition into adult services.
- Conversely in the small minority of lessons when activities do not create a spark in the minds of the pupils, or fail to absorb their interest, time is lost and progress, particularly pupils' communication skills, is not good enough throughout the whole lesson. For example when one pupil was observed not engaging in a matching activity he did not communicate with staff. This meant therefore that the pupil missed out on a valuable opportunity to improve and develop his literacy and communication skills. Several minutes later his interest was re-ignited by the prospect of taking part in a 'creative expression' session; he was animated, using facial expression and even using verbal communication to express his joy.
- The progress of younger pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2, as with other parts of the school is too variable. However, younger pupils from other schools who attend 'Learn and Play' sessions at High Park School each week are successfully supported in their mainstream placement. This represents excellent progress.
- Staff responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage area of the school are making effective use of the mixture of open and closed spaces to provide a wide range of interesting learning opportunities. Pupils new to the school were observed growing in confidence because they were able to express themselves in painting activities and running and chasing games. These pupils were able to make choices for themselves and communicate with adults using facial expression and gestures. This represents good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not good because there are missed opportunities to engage pupils effectively in learning experiences, especially in the classroom. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection matches closely that seen by senior leaders of the school. While there are elements of good or better teaching there is a significant proportion of teaching which is not good enough.
- Teachers do not plan their lessons sufficiently well to clearly identify what individual pupils are expected to learn and therefore adults cannot always identify easily the tiny steps which some pupils make on a lesson by lesson basis. Consequently, in some instances adults are unclear about how they should support or challenge pupils to move on. Here progress is slow.
- Weak teaching is characterised across the school by an over emphasis on pupils choosing activities for themselves with little or no input from an adult. When there is too little direction and guidance from adults pupils move too quickly from one activity to another or find difficulty in making choices for themselves. This results in them wandering aimlessly around the teaching

area. Consequently, pupils make too little progress because either their learning is not sufficiently well reinforced or too much time is wasted.

- Where teaching was observed to be good or better, adults were seen to take more control of the learning environment and provide a good balance between pupil choice and adult-led activity. In one example the teacher had organised an exciting range of learning activities around light and colour. Some adults had been directed to work in particular areas while others supported the movement of pupils from one activity to another. This made every area within the room a learning experience; as the pupils moved around they could not fail to encounter a learning opportunity which was supported by an adult. As a result pupils made rapid gains in both their knowledge of the world and their skills in interacting with others.
- A minority of adults do not have either the detailed understanding of individual pupils' needs and interests or the skills necessary to adeptly engage pupils in every activity in every lesson. When this is the case opportunities to teach pupils new skills or to reinforce those already learned are missed, consequently the rate of learning in these lessons drops.
- Conversely in lessons when teachers use their in-depth knowledge of how individual pupils prefer to learn, the rate of progress remains at least good throughout. For example when one pupil was observed to have lost interest in an activity and began to run around the classroom and outdoor area, the teacher quickly took action, used facial expression and gesture and turned his running into a teacher controlled chase game. As a result of the teacher's application of her knowledge and understanding of how individuals learn, the pupil made good progress because he was enjoying learning and also using his own facial expression to convey his pleasure.
- When teachers share and adapt good practices seen elsewhere in the school, for instance the use of outdoor space in the Early Years area, they provide excellent learning opportunities while maintaining the school's ethos of pupil choice and high expectations. For example in one class for older children the teacher used the outdoor area to provide additional activities at different height levels and even in front of a tent used by one boy as a quiet area. As a result all the pupils in the class were observed to be engaged in learning for the vast majority of the lesson, something which was a marked improvement from the previous day. Progress here was good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Due to the extremely high level of communication and interaction difficulties experienced by all of the pupils at High Park School meticulous planning and thought goes into every aspect of the school day. From the precisely planned arrival in over forty taxis, through escorted movement from one activity to another to preparation for leaving at the end of the day, no stone is left unturned to ensure the pupils do not experience unnecessary stress. This unquestionably high level of commitment shown by all staff contributes effectively to the pupils' good behaviour.
- Relationships are excellent. As a result pupils respond quickly to the requests of staff. In all cases requests are matched to the pupils' level of understanding and are made often in the form of distraction, through facial expression or by touching. This level of understanding of the needs of individuals contributes much to the progress that pupils make including in their personal development.
- Pupils' attendance is good and excellent relationships with parents and carers ensures that the school knows on a daily basis where pupils are if they are absent from school.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Many can be seen to display their excitement and joy especially when teaching is good and they can become actively involved in their learning. One boy was observed in a creative expression session using information technology to create a new world in which to express his emotions. He was engrossed in the activity but more importantly he was beginning to find ways of communicating his feelings to others.
- Pupils spoken to said that they enjoy coming to school every day because they like the teachers. They like aromatherapy because it helps them relax and swimming because it is fun. Pupils also feel safe and those spoken to were very clear about who they would speak to if they felt unsafe in school.

- Staff receive regular high quality training in how to manage challenging behaviour in school. A behaviour management team analyse information about individual pupils' behaviour and use this information to support staff in taking action to reduce the anxiety levels of pupils. On the occasions when pupils are unable to manage their own behaviour a highly trained team responds quickly to calm the situation and ensure that the learning of other pupils is not interrupted. As a result major incidents are lower than might be expected given the nature of the pupils' needs.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in some lessons, where teaching is not good or better, pupils are not always engaged in learning for the whole of the lesson and this occasionally leads to the disruption of others' learning.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- High Park has come through a recent period of significant change including the retirement of the previous headteacher and a move to a new building on a different site. During this time leaders' have not focused rigorously on the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement. Consequently the quality of teaching overall has dipped as has the rate of progress made by pupils overall.
- The new headteacher and the governing body recognise that pupils' achievement is not good enough and that more needs to be done to ensure every pupil has an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. Actions taken by leaders since moving into the new building have not yet secured good teaching across the school.
- The school's self-evaluation of its own performance, whilst accurate, is not sufficiently detailed to allow in-depth analysis of how well particular groups of pupils are progressing. As a result leaders do not know the extent to which additional interventions, provided for some pupils at extra cost, make any difference to the quality of pupils' learning.
- Systems to check on the performance of teachers are in place and used effectively to set targets and improve performance. However, the number of qualified teachers is relatively low and similar systems to check the performance of staff who are not qualified teachers have not been used effectively to ensure all staff perform at the level expected of their grade. As a result inconsistencies in the quality of teaching can be seen across the school.
- There is increased involvement of middle leaders in school management. In some areas, such as in the sixth form, leaders provide clear direction and promote activities such as the building of partnerships to support school leavers in their move to adult services. However, management structures are not sufficiently well developed across the school to enable senior leaders to take the time needed to implement planned improvements.
- The school provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The schools' creative curriculum includes a good focus of developing the pupils' enjoyment of learning and their appreciation of the world around them. Additional activities such as 'creative expression' develop pupils' confidence. All pupils have an opportunity to take part in sporting activities and money provided by the government to spend on sport for primary age children has been used to offer 'rebound therapy'. Good use is made of computer technology with many pupils using it to create digital art work; some pupils are able to access video clips as part of their learning.
- Links with independent providers are used effectively to support sixth form pupils as they move into the care of adult services.
- Parents are supportive of the school and its leadership. They are keen to support the learning of their children and many make major changes to their home life following advice from the school. Of the parents who either completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, or contacted inspectors by letter, they were overwhelmingly positive about the school with no well-founded complaints or concerns.
- During the recent period of leadership instability along with the upheaval of moving the school to a new site, the local authority has not taken prompt action to ensure leaders of the school remain focussed on making sure the quality of teaching is at least good. Since taking up post the

new headteacher has worked closely with the local authority who has devised a plan of support to be provided by the local authority to the school. High Park is now a number one priority for the local authority and support has already been given to help leaders effectively identify areas for improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have not acted speedily to ensure leaders improve the quality of teaching across the school. Governors are supportive of the school and its leadership. Governors have a good grasp of the main areas for improvement and are in agreement with senior leaders' self-evaluation. Governors are clear about how additional money such as pupil premium funding and primary sports funding is spent. However, they are not secure in the effectiveness of this spending. This is because they do not receive detailed analysis of information from leaders and are therefore not in a position to challenge leaders effectively about the rate of pupils' progress or the quality of teaching.
- Governors make sure that the school meets safeguarding 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	135861
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	430001

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	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Butterfield
Headteacher	Ann Andrew
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2011
Telephone number	01274 614092
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@highpark.org.uk

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