

Saxon Mount School

Edinburgh Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN38 6HH

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The executive headteacher, head of school and senior leaders supported by a strong governing body are the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement in the last three years. The 'hard' federation has strengthened the governing body.
- All students make good progress and leave in Year 11 with a range of vocational qualifications and GCSEs because of the school's excellent Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- An increased number of more able students in Key Stage 4 made expected and more-than-expected rates of progress in English and mathematics in 2013 than in previous years, and this trend is set to continue.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are taught and encouraged to value working and playing with each other without supervision. Their social skills have been honed and this is a key strength of the school.
- Students eligible for the additional school funding such as the pupil premium and catch-up Year 7 funding are making similar progress to others in the school and gaps are narrowing.
- Teaching in the Additional Support Facility is exceptional and all students develop independent life skills and learn reading, writing and problem-solving skills through a wide range of qualifications that prepares them well for college.
- Most parents say that their children are kept safe. They are delighted with how happy their children are to come to school, and this is reflected in the high attendance of the last three years.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is highly successful and embedded in the curriculum and the everyday life of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons in Key Stage 3, students' progress was too slow because some teachers do not match activities to the abilities of students.
- Teachers' marking in students' books do not always help students to improve their work.
- Teachers were not routinely using information about students' prior learning to plan their lessons.
- Leaders of subjects were not ensuring that targets given to students in Key Stage 3 were challenging and demanding enough to encourage rapid improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, 12 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons, looked at students' work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and governors, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a community governor. A telephone conversation was held with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View as well as parent questionnaire responses gathered and analysed by the school and other external evaluators.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation, including nationally published data and the school's own data, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records and documents relating to performance management.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Andrew Penman

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Saxon Mount School is a special school for 11–16-year-olds.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- About a fifth of students are girls. The rest are boys.
- The school was re-designated by the local authority over five years ago as a school catering for students with autism and associated communication and learning difficulties. Most students have moderate learning difficulties and are on the autistic spectrum. Some students have speech, communication and language difficulties. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- About a fifth of students with complex additional needs which can affect their rate of learning are educated separately in the Additional Support Facility (ASF).
- More than half of the students are 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); this is much higher than the national average.
- Since the previous inspection the school has experienced major changes. The school became part of a 'hard' federation of two schools, Saxon Mount and Torfield School, in April 2012. As a result, there have been key adjustments, especially in leadership and governance. Currently the two schools are run by the same governing body and executive headteacher, with a head of school in charge of each school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the small proportion of teaching that is less than good in Key Stage 3 by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities that match the abilities of students
 - teachers' marking consistently leads to improvements in writing and mathematics
 - teachers use information on students' prior learning to routinely plan their lessons
 - leaders of subjects regularly check the end-of-key-stage targets for students in reading, writing and mathematics to make sure they are challenging and demanding enough to drive forward improvements in teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students join in Year 7 with skills and knowledge that are significantly below the levels expected nationally for their age. About half of students come from mainstream schools with gaps in their learning in English, mathematics and social skills. All students make good progress and leave in Year 11 with a range of vocational qualifications and GCSEs because of the school's excellent Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- Students' speaking and listening skills are good overall and continually developed through well-planned opportunities to discuss and explore their ideas. This is because all teachers and supporting adults have been well trained to use visual cues, photographs, and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment such as tablets, where necessary, to ensure that students' listening, concentration and communication skills are developed well. As a result, students with speech, language and communication difficulties make good progress.
- There is an improving picture of progress in English and mathematics for students in Key Stage 4. The progress of more able students in Key Stage 4 is significantly better than it was previously and is on an upward trajectory. This is reflected in the increased number of students who made expected and more-than-expected rates of progress in 2013 compared to 2012. This trend is set to continue in 2014. Progress in English and mathematics is slower in Key Stage 3.
- Students' progress in writing is improving, although lagging a little behind that in mathematics and reading in Key Stage 3. Students' writing is benefiting from increased opportunities to write in different contexts and subjects.
- Students enjoy reading. Parents and carers work jointly with the school to improve students' reading skills. Well-targeted after-school clubs focusing on teaching reading are helping Year 7 students to improve their reading skills through phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and, consequently, gaps between students' reading ages and their actual age is reducing rapidly.
- All groups of students make rapid progress relative to their individual starting points as a result of the school's carefully planned and well-delivered additional help and guidance. For example, all students identified as needing significant extra support who are taught in the Additional Support Facility are making good progress and obtaining relevant qualifications that prepare them well to continue their education in local colleges.
- Students eligible for support under the pupil premium initiative made similar progress to other students in the school. The attainment gap between students eligible for the pupil premium and others has been low for the last two years. This is because funding has been properly spent on meeting the needs of identified students through training of staff, buying information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, improving wireless networks, subsidising learning visits and employing Pupil Personal Mentor.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching throughout the school is good overall, with examples of outstanding practice seen in some lessons in Key Stage 4 such as life skills, ICT and art. A small amount of teaching in Key Stage 3 is still not consistently good because some teachers do not match activities to the abilities of students. As a result, progress is sometimes too slow for some students.
- The way subjects and topics are taught is exciting and interesting for most students. This is because teachers and additional adults focus on developing students' ability to use and apply literacy and problem-solving skills in a range of subjects. For example, in one outstanding life skills lesson in the ASF, students were taught finance and enterprise skills using excellent resources such as tablets. As a result, students made good progress in their literacy, numeracy and communication skills.

- In lessons, students are taught and encouraged to value working with each other without the support of adults. Consequently, students' attitudes and relationships with one another and adults are good and are a key strength of the school.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics has improved over the year because of the school's actions to improve rates of progress. However, teachers' marking of students' work, while regular, is not leading to further improvements because comments are not always helping students to know what progress they are making, their next steps in learning and how to achieve them.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of what students can do and provide interesting and demanding activities that motivate them. Lessons typically have a good pace and plenty of variety. This is particularly true of teaching at Key Stage 4. As a result, most students enjoy school and feel they are taught well. This is a view shared by most parents and carers who responded to the school's questionnaires and Parent View.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of their students. They skilfully use their knowledge of students' existing understanding to plan their next steps in learning. As a result, work is set at the right level to move students on and ensure that they achieve the targets set for them. However, a small amount of teaching in Key Stage 3 is less effective. This is because a few teachers do not effectively use information on students' prior learning to plan their lessons.
- The school has recently started to tackle weaknesses in the teaching of phonics. Staff are skilled in helping students to become familiar with phonics and to develop high levels of confidence as readers. As a result, reading is increasingly well taught and students are encouraged to read widely in most year groups. There are now good opportunities for students to read and talk about books with other adults, as well as their teachers, every day. In Year 7, parents and carers get directly involved through students' reading journals.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say they love and are proud of their school. They are polite, respectful to each other and adults, and want to do their best. Students form excellent working relationships with the staff.
- Those who find it difficult to behave consistently well on entry to school make good progress in managing their own behaviour especially in the Additional Support Facility. This is because of the very clear guidance from staff, who are highly skilled at motivating students and managing their behaviour positively. Well-designed behaviour action plans enable students to do their best to improve and provide them with the help to do so.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Most students on the autistic spectrum have very challenging behaviours associated with their special educational needs. Staff are adept at managing these behaviours and removing obstacles to learning for students. Hence, students engage well with learning and show a high level of enthusiasm for the rewards they receive in their Friday celebration assemblies.
- Most parents say that their children are kept safe. They are delighted with how happy their children are to come to school, and this is reflected in the high attendance of the last three years.
- Students get on well with each other, especially in the playground. They understand the meaning of bullying, including cyber-bullying, because it is explicitly taught as part of the citizenship curriculum. As a result, bullying is rare and exclusions have reduced drastically.
- Non-academic individual targets set for students by their teachers to improve communication and social skills have had a positive impact on pupils, especially students on the autistic spectrum. The self-confidence of these students grows as they proceed through the school and

become increasingly independent.

- Staff manage students' behaviour well and use a common system linked to rewards which is colour coded so students can understand it. Students who try hard to produce their best efforts are given 'merit' points. This has helped to address occasional off-task behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, head of school and senior leaders are the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement since the school became part of a 'hard' federation. They have kept the quality of the curriculum under review to ensure it matches the abilities of students. Consequently, all students make good progress and leave Year 11 to attend a range of post-16 colleges.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are rigorous and appropriately linked to students' progress. Teaching is consistently good, as a direct consequence of frequent checking of the quality of teaching to make sure that it is sharply focused on how teachers can improve classroom practice.
- The school engages well with parents and carers and responds to their requests. All parents and carers attended the annual review of their children last year to discuss their children's learning and behaviour, and feedback from parent questionnaires is highly positive. Parents are involved with their children's choices for their next step in education. As a result, all students have a college placement when they leave.
- The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of popular additional activities which include learning trips and visits for both sporting and cultural purposes. In addition, a number of after-school and holiday activities are offered regularly. All of these add to the enjoyment of students.
- The additional funding received by the school for Year 7 catch-up programmes is used to organise and pay for additional after-school, holiday and Saturday activities in reading and mathematics for identified students in Year 7. These programmes are beginning to have an impact on students' progress in these subjects.
- The training of teachers is sharply focused on identified areas for improvement in the school's action plans. Teachers benefit from training and occasions to exchange expertise within the new federation, and plans to improve links have been established.
- Leaders have developed good systems and procedures for checking that the assessment of students is rigorous and accurate. Some students have been given appropriate and demanding end-of-key-stage targets, but not all of them. Leaders of subjects have not taken responsibility for making sure that all students' targets are challenging and in line with national expectations of progress. Consequently, progress in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 is slower than at Key Stage 4.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is highly successful and embedded in the curriculum and the everyday life of the school. There is a strong emphasis on spiritual and moral education linked to religious education and students are encouraged to explore ideas and think about differences between people and their cultures through visits and trips.
- The school has had support from the local authority, especially in the checking of the quality of its teaching and the review of its curriculum.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been strengthened by the new 'hard' federation and is more effective in challenging senior leaders to bring about improvement. It knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and has been trained well to understand the detailed progress information provided by the school.
 - Since the previous inspection, the governing body has supported the school to sharpen its self-evaluation and action plans. It understands the way the school is sharply focused on removing obstacles to learning and less on categories of students' needs.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and how it links to students'

progress and the school's pay structure. They know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance. Some experienced governors volunteer time to extend the curriculum, such as through organising interview skills learning for Key Stage 4 students.

- The governing body is aware of what the pupil premium is used for and they are well informed by school leaders about the difference it is making to the achievement and well-being of eligible pupils.
- Governors take safeguarding very seriously and have effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

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	114691
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	426557

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Smith
Headteacher	Richard Preece
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 January 2011
Telephone number	01424 426303
Fax number	01424 444115
Email address	office@saxon.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

