

Little Heath School

Hainault Road, Little Heath, Romford, Essex, RM6 5RX

Inspection dates

February 2014

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.

- As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress in relation to their various starting points and capabilities.
- The range of subjects and activities offered by the school in Key Stages 3 and 4 is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils, with a strong emphasis on developing language and communication skills.
- School leaders closely check and assess each aspect of the school's work and ensure that standards of teaching and pupils' performance continue to improve.
- The management of behaviour is consistently good. Positive relationships between staff and pupils make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils report they feel safe and enjoy learning, a view confirmed by parents, carers and staff.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The governing body is supportive but governors do not provide a sharp enough challenge to school leaders and do not contribute sufficiently to the strategic direction of the school.
- The sixth form is expanding and further changes are required to ensure that provision meets the needs of the increasing proportion of sixth form students who have complex needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils’ current progress, self-evaluation documents, checks carried out by leaders on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited 18 lessons, including five that were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They listened to pupils read aloud and talked to them about their work.
- They discussed the work of the school with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- The inspection team reviewed the responses to 64 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection. They also listened to the views of a range of school staff.
- The team took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a written response from a parent or carer.

Inspection team

Robert Ellis, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Little Heath is a small special school catering for pupils who have moderate to severe learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have complex needs has increased in recent years.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with the greatest proportions being from White British or Asian heritages.
- Most pupils speak English as their main language.
- Around two thirds of pupils are boys.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve sixth form provision by:
 - ensuring efficient use is made of the new sixth form accommodation
 - building on improvements to the sixth form curriculum to ensure the needs of all sixth form students are met, particularly those with more complex needs
 - providing sixth form students with more opportunities to have leadership responsibilities and greater involvement with the rest of the school.
- Improve governance by:
 - undertaking an external review of governance and acting on its recommendations so that the governing body provides rigorous challenge to school leaders
 - agreeing a protocol for governors' visits to the school
 - strengthening the governing body's role in the strategic direction of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make consistently good progress in most classes. Scrutiny of pupils' work and school information shows all groups of pupils are progressing equally well over time. Progress is strongest at Key Stage 4.
- As pupils progress through the school, their language and communication skills improve. Lessons are very inclusive and all pupils are enabled to contribute to discussions regardless of their barriers to communication. Staff encourage pupils to develop and apply their skills in verbal, signed or symbolic forms of communication.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make progress in line with that of their peers in school. Pupils who do not have English as their first language also make good progress.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used to provide support and resources for pupils who have fallen behind or are at risk of falling behind.
- The excellent progress that pupils make in their personal, social and moral development is a particular strength of the school. Pupils enjoy learning to learn, play and communicate with each other and are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Progress in English and mathematics is good because pupils are provided with good opportunities to practise their skills in activities which are as close to real-life situations as possible.
- Despite the increasingly complex needs of sixth form students, most make at least expected progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- An increasing proportion of pupils gain external accreditation for their learning. More-able pupils are encouraged to take GCSE examinations in a broadening range of subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good with elements that are outstanding. This good teaching promotes positive attitudes to learning in all pupils. Mutual respect and high expectations foster good achievement.
- Teachers know their pupils well and provide a wide range of stimulating and interesting activities which are carefully matched to the needs and starting points of each individual pupil. This ensures that all achieve well.
- Strong partnerships between teachers and other adults in the classroom ensure that pupils get the right level of challenge and support throughout lessons.
- Adults in the classroom use questioning well to help pupils develop their understanding and to test if pupils are ready to move on or need further support.
- Teachers and other adults who support learning work closely with outside agencies to ensure pupils' barriers to learning are overcome.
- Established routines in classrooms ensure pupils know what is expected of them. In a few lessons, time is lost when pupils move between activities because these transitions are not organised well enough.
- In lessons, whole-class activities are carefully structured so that all pupils can be active participants in the learning activity during these sessions. However, in a small minority of lessons, whole-class activities are not as well planned for and do not promote learning for all pupils consistently well.
- Teachers use a range of visits to places of interest and visitors to enhance learning and to give pupils experiences of life outside the school community. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn to sail at a local centre.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next phase of their education and for moving into adult life.

Most go on to further study or training when they leave the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Many pupils enter the school with highly complex needs and very low prior attainment. Their behaviour and any other difficulties are managed well and pupils receive good care and guidance to help them develop the skills they need to be successful in their learning and personal development.
- Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons and enjoy the various learning activities they participate in. Pupils and staff regularly celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils respond to instructions and usually require little more than gentle encouragement to ensure they do what is expected of them.
- Pupils are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others and generally respond positively to the good opportunities they are given to socialise with others.
- The playgrounds and public areas are calm and orderly. Pupils who find interacting with others in larger groups and less structured activities more challenging have opportunities to attend supervised clubs and activities where they feel more secure.
- Staff deal efficiently with any issues that might arise. Pupils say they are confident that staff would listen to them if they had a problem and that any concerns they raise are given due consideration and successfully resolved.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying and this is confirmed by the school's behaviour logs, which are well kept. Most parents, carers and staff judge that behaviour is good.
- Pupils are taught about how to be safe both in and outside school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were clear about the importance of road safety and pupils paid close attention to an assembly on safer internet use.
- Pupils' views are represented by the school council and are collected as part of the school's annual review process.
- Sixth form students are involved in a recycling scheme but their role in wider school life is limited. There are too few opportunities for them to undertake leadership roles within the school community, other than as representatives on the school council.
- Attendance is just below the national average and improving. The school has effective systems and procedures to challenge and support pupils who do not attend regularly.
- The school environment is a safe and secure place for pupils to learn. Pupils say they feel safe and their parents and carers agree. The impact of the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because the senior leadership team has a clear and accurate view of the school as a result of careful tracking and monitoring of all aspects of the school's work.
- A rigorous and effective approach is taken to the monitoring and development of teaching. Pay progression is closely linked to the quality of teaching and the impact this has on pupils' performance. The improving profile of teaching demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.
- The school has good systems to monitor pupils' progress and targets are challenging but achievable. Where pupils are not on track to achieve their targets, additional support is provided to help them catch up.

- The school has strong links with other schools and has an extensive outreach service which provides specialist support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and their teachers. The school also works closely with parent and carer groups, the local authority and other agencies.
 - Subject leaders play an active part in promoting improvement in their areas of responsibility. Staff have regular training to ensure they can improve their practice. Most staff were positive about these development opportunities but some support staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that their training needs were not met.
 - There is a good range of interesting and stimulating activities for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 with a strong emphasis on developing communication and language skills. Leaders are aware of the need to build on improvements to the sixth form curriculum to make sure that it meets the needs of all students, particularly those who have more complex needs.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and religions and there are links with schools in other countries to support learning about pupils' own and other societies.
 - Pupil premium funding has been used appropriately to: fund individual and group music therapy which supports pupils with specific emotional difficulties; provide a support adviser to aid improvement to attendance and communication with parents and carers; and provide a range of activities to enhance community involvement and social interaction.
 - Accommodation is adequate and a new sixth form centre has recently been built but is not yet in use. The school has a variety of different buildings which have been added to over time. Some of the accommodation limits the range of activities which can be undertaken, particularly for those pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders.
 - Parents and carers are kept informed about matters which affect their child. A parent/pupil support adviser works with individual pupils and families as appropriate.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support the school and ensure that safeguarding systems meet current requirements. They monitor and approve the performance management of staff and ensure that finances are managed well. Governors do not rigorously monitor all aspects of the school's work. They are too reliant on information provided by the headteacher. Governors visit the school but there is no agreed protocol for these visits and, although these are reported verbally at full governing body meetings, there are no consistent written records of these visits. This limits the impact of the governors' work in monitoring the quality of the school's work.
 - Governors do not contribute sufficiently to the strategic direction of the school.
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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	102878
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	427155

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Rayner
Headteacher	James Brownlie
Date of previous school inspection	September 2010
Telephone number	020 8599 4864
Fax number	020 8590 8953
Email address	school@lheath.net

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