

Stormont House School

Downs Park Road, Hackney, London, E5 8NP

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, senior team and governors lead the school outstandingly well, ensuring that both teaching and achievement are of a high standard. The tracking of pupils' learning and progress is accurate, consistent and rigorous.
- Outstanding teaching inspires pupils to enjoy learning so that they make rapid progress and develop excellent personal skills.
- Pupils at Stormont House make excellent progress from their starting points, so that by the time they leave they are achieving well above pupils with similar levels of need.
- Pupils receive consistent, high-quality feedback in their books. They respond to comments from their teachers, which supports their ongoing progress.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium make outstanding progress because teachers and teaching assistants make sure that they learn exceptionally well. This is also true of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and say they feel safe in school, and are so happy to attend that the school's rate of attendance is above average.
- Parents are extremely pleased with the school's work to keep their children happy and safe.
- Governors make sure that the pupil premium funding makes an excellent contribution to the achievement of eligible pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, eight of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made three shorter visits to lessons to focus on specific aspects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in class and attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence on the opinions of parents, but inspectors took account of comments from parent surveys carried out by the school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including school improvement plans, data on pupils' current progress, pupils' written work, the governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janev Mehmet, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Tysoe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stormont House is a special school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years who have a range of learning difficulties, including moderate learning difficulties; speech, language and communication needs and autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils have a complex range of needs including emotional, social or mental health needs; specific learning difficulties and/or sensory needs.
- A large majority of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families. There are currently no pupils from service families in the school.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and many of them speak English as an additional language.
- The school has been involved in Building Schools for the Future (BSF) for three years, which involves the process of planning a new building, and has just recently moved into its new accommodation.
- The school is in the process of introducing a Year 12 initiative to ensure the current Year 11 pupils have more time to adjust to the complexities of life and the next stage in their lives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the high standards across the school so that any new initiatives blend in well with existing strengths.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The achievement of pupils and their progress from each different starting point is outstanding. This is because pupils consistently make progress that is more rapid than is typically found.
- As pupils' learning difficulties provide challenges in learning, rates of progress are measured in small steps. The proportion exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics, as well as in a range of learning and social skills, exceeds that found nationally for pupils with similar needs.
- Literacy and numeracy are promoted very strongly across the school and are well supported by the outstanding teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are provided with opportunities to empathise with characters in stories they read. During World Book Day, pupils arrived at school dressed in costumes of characters from their favourite book.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding make outstanding progress in both mathematics and English, as do other identified groups, including those from minority ethnic groups or those who speak English as an additional language. The school's work to promote equality of opportunity is excellent.
- Throughout the school there is clear evidence of the progress being made by pupils because their needs are known and understood, and they are supported to fulfil their potential. As a result, pupils really enjoy coming to school and working hard.
- High achievement is also reflected in practical and sporting opportunities. For example, groups of pupils are regularly representing the school in local and national sporting competitions, such as football, boccia and athletics. Some pupils also perform in the school's musical band at a range of venues. These opportunities help build pupils' confidence and pride in their school community.
- By the end of Year 11, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next phase of their lives because the school provides experiences for them to be independent, confident, and able to make choices. For example, pupils receive training on how to travel independently to and from school. This process is planned carefully to develop pupils' confidence gradually, and to support parents each step of the way. As a result, pupils are able to secure college placements because they can travel independently.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Pupils are excited about learning and develop rich knowledge and skills through creative and cross-curricular tasks. For example, pupils use photography skills to produce tessellations (mathematical patterns) of a microbe. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic learners who enjoy thinking and trying new activities.
- Spacious and colour-coded corridors, which are vibrant with pupils' work and trophies of their sporting success, create a stimulating learning environment.
- Pupils are articulate and extremely dedicated towards learning because they are nurtured to have high aspirations. For example, Year 10 pupils in a mathematics lesson supported each other during working on a practice examination question, by talking and challenging each other.
- Teaching staff understand every pupil's level of ability in every subject because they plan together and provide specific targets for pupils' progress. These are shared with pupils during lessons.
- Pupils receive high-quality feedback and guidance during classroom activities and in their books. Comments praising their work are written in green pen, and areas where they need to improve are explained in orange pen. This provides clarity for pupils who respond to their teachers' questions or tasks regularly.
- Pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics rapidly because their experiences

in the classroom are appropriate to their achievements and personalities. They are encouraged to express themselves through art, drama, sports and discussions. They use computers and technical equipment confidently, and record or film each other acting or dancing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils at Stormont House are kind, respectful and cooperative. They are part of the caring community of children and adults, which makes being at school a happy and safe experience.
- Many pupils arrive at the school with challenging behaviour caused by their wider learning difficulties. The excellent skills of the school staff in managing behaviour positively ensure that pupils feel respected and valued. As a result, pupils behave extremely well and pay attention in their lessons. Consequently, incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils love being in class and learning. Their ability to work well, both on their own and within groups, is visible across the school. Pupils check each other's work on a regular basis and reflect on their own learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are involved in making sure that their school is a friendly and welcoming place. They know how to apply the principles of e-safety when using computers and how to keep healthy. Bullying is very rare and pupils feel confident in speaking to each other if they need to express their feelings.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school and how it keeps their children happy and safe. A parent who recently visited the school wrote the following in a questionnaire, 'Fantastic behaviour of pupils. Staff are a credit to the school!'
- Staff are also positive about the behaviour and safety in the school.
- Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well and makes sure that all leaders and managers contribute effectively to a learning community that serves the needs of its pupils. There is a relentless focus on helping pupils to maximise their full potential. Consequently, the school has maintained its outstanding practice since the last inspection.
- Middle leaders work together very successfully, and at a fast pace, to ensure that high-quality learning and progress of all pupils are the school's core purpose. Improvement planning is detailed and focused sharply on the school's key priorities. Systems for tracking pupils' progress help leaders and staff to support pupils' achievement extremely well.
- The pupil premium is allocated effectively. For example, funding is used to extend one-to-one tutorial sessions for pupils, as well as to secure the expertise of a speech and language therapist. Pupils improve their social and communication skills as well making excellent progress in lessons.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and organised by all teachers. Subjects and activities offered take full account of pupils' specific needs to enjoy and achieve in new learning opportunities. Pupils deepen their knowledge through activities that develop teamwork, creative thinking and an understanding of the world.
- The school very successfully ensures that all elements of spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is embedded across the curriculum. Learning about other cultures, religions and countries is extremely well integrated into the school's curriculum. Pupils learn Spanish, and have an ongoing dialogue with pupils from school in Taiwan.
- The school works with the wider community through a Teaching Schools Alliance. This enables it to share best practice and contribute to the development of other teachers.
- Safeguarding practices meet the statutory requirements.

■ The local authority provides light touch support for the school by visiting at key points and endorsing partnership working with other schools within the Teaching Schools Alliance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports and challenges the headteacher and his team extremely well, and ensures that teaching and achievement are of high quality. The Chair of the Governing Body holds the school to account, and ensures that governors develop their skills through regular training. Governors visit the school regularly to keep up to date with developments and celebrate the pupils' successes. They are very proud of the school and its efforts in ensuring that the school environment has excellent facilities for pupils to develop. Governors visit lessons and familiarise themselves with the work of teachers and pupils. They have an excellent understanding of the school's data and how they are being used to maximise the impact of teaching. They ensure that teachers are suitably rewarded for good performance related to the quality of their teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors allocate pupil premium funding in the best interests of the pupils concerned. Consequently, these pupils make excellent progress from their starting points.

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	100307
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	425585

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Hawes
Headteacher	Kevin McDonnell
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 November 2008
Telephone number	020 89854245
Email address	info@stormonthouse.hackney.sch.uk

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