

Hillside School

Foredown Road, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 2FU

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Hillside is an outstanding school where pupils are happy, feel safe and make rapid progress. They feel valued and cared for.
- Leaders, managers and governors are extremely ambitious for the school. The new headteacher has set a clear vision to make sure that the exceptional provision continues.
- Leaders' very high expectations, together with excellent opportunities for staff development, have resulted in outstanding teaching and achievement.
- Assessment is so effective that teachers can plan and match activities for every pupil's needs on a daily basis, ensuring that each makes fast progress.
- Achievement is outstanding because almost all pupils make at least expected progress and the majority make more than expected progress over time.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent over time. They treat each other with respect and kindness because that is how adults treat them at all times. The school gives pupils many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- The subjects the school teaches are closely matched to the needs of the pupils and this prepares them very well for their next stage in education.
- The early years provision offers the children an excellent start to school. This helps children settle into school quickly and makes learning fun for them.
- Parents are very positive about the school's work. Other schools also value the expertise, support and training that they receive from Hillside's staff.
- Not all teachers give pupils their next steps in a way that can be easily understood. The environment is not consistently stimulating in all classrooms.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 13 lessons in a range of subjects and year groups, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and some individual sessions. Five were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the online parents’ survey, Parent View, and of the school’s own recent parents’ survey.
- Inspectors held meetings with various members of staff and representatives from the governing body. They spoke to pupils and looked at behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors also looked at documentation about pupils’ progress, teaching and planning. The school’s documents on safeguarding were scrutinised, together with records of attendance and pupils’ behaviour.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in classes and looked at their work.

Inspection team

Helen Howard, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school for pupils who have severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. There are more boys than girls. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium (additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is a little above average.
- Pupils are grouped according to their type of need, in mixed-age classes within key stages. Reception children attend full time and are taught alongside Key Stage 1 pupils.
- A small number of pupils attend Peter Gladwin School and Lancing College, which are local mainstream primary and secondary schools. Pupils are accompanied by Hillside staff.
- The school is available as an 'outreach' service to any other schools in the local area, giving expertise, advice and training to their staff.
- The long-serving previous headteacher retired in July 2014 and the new headteacher was appointed from September.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently tell pupils what the next steps in their learning will be, in a way that pupils can understand.
- Continue to develop an environment that stimulates and engages pupils' learning in all classrooms.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and managers are highly ambitious for the school. Together with governors and very strong senior leaders and managers, they are ensuring that what the school offers continues to be outstanding.
- The new headteacher is dynamic and already planning to secure future improvements. This is a school that is continuously looking forward and taking every available opportunity to make sure that all pupils make the best possible progress. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.
- Leaders and managers rigorously check the work of the school. They use their accurate judgements to plan specific actions for improvements. These, together with the wealth of training opportunities for all staff, result in outstanding teaching across the school. Leaders ensure there are equal opportunities for all and do not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Subject leaders routinely check how well pupils are doing in their subject and plan actions where there are identified weaknesses. The improvements made in pupils' achievements in science across the school during the last two years are a good example of the impact of subject leaders' actions. Improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement since the last inspection show that there is capacity for further improvement.
- The use of assessment is a strength of the school. Leaders use a range of information to check how well pupils are doing. They work with other schools to check accuracy. They use the information carefully to plan the next steps for individual pupils. The very few pupils who do not make expected progress are quickly identified and actions are successfully taken to help them catch up.
- Only a very small number of pupils are working at National Curriculum levels and the school is well on its way towards its preferred way of tracking their progress, given that levels are being removed.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and adapted very effectively according to pupils' needs. Grouping arrangements also help pupils to make rapid progress because teachers provide specialist equipment and resources to promote learning and communication. Pupils receive excellent advice and guidance as they move through the school and this prepares them very well for life in modern Britain and their next stage of education.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many trips and activities that enrich what is on offer. These provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Leaders and managers have highly effective partnerships with other special schools, mainstream schools and external agencies. Consequently, they provide a joined-up approach that combines personal, social and academic development. They also share their best practice as part of the well-regarded 'outreach programme', which offers a range of advice to schools.
- Additional funding is used very effectively to provide additional help for communication, reading and mathematics to eligible pupils so there are no differences in the achievement of these pupils and their peers. The additional primary sports funding is also having a positive impact because pupils are trying new sports.
- The link between the targets set for teachers, whole school developments, staff training and the quality of teaching is very strong. It results in outstanding teaching being maintained throughout the school.
- The local authority provides light-touch support. As it holds Hillside in high regard in recognition of the quality of work of the school, it seeks the school's help to provide support to other schools.

The governance of the school:

- The governing body has been instrumental in ensuring that strong leadership has been maintained following the retirement of the previous headteacher. Governors bring a range of expertise and know the school extremely well. They have a good understanding of the data and the quality of teaching. They hold leaders to account and frequently visit to check how the school is doing. They know how additional funding is used and its impact on pupils' outcomes. They are fully involved in the evaluation of the school's performance and receive detailed information about the management of teachers' performance so they can check that the quality of teaching matches pay. They meet statutory duties, including the safeguarding of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school and their positive attitudes help them make rapid progress.
- Staff are exceptionally skilled in managing sometimes challenging behaviour with a calm and consistent approach. This means that learning is never disrupted for other pupils. Staff have developed great expertise in using signs, symbols and very clear and consistent routines to promote and reinforce positive behaviour.
- There are no exclusions and no recorded incidents of bullying. When asked, pupils could say that there was sometimes 'silly' behaviour but that staff managed it well.
- The school helps parents by providing advice and support on managing day-to-day behaviour. In one lesson pupils with autistic spectrum disorders were being taught about 'going to the hairdresser', because they had found this difficult in the past. All pupils joined in and completed the activity.
- Despite high levels of need, pupils learn and play together very successfully. They are constantly encouraged to communicate with each other and to listen to others. Adults model high levels of respect at all times.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All of the parents who responded to the online survey agreed that their child is safe. Pupils say that they never feel unsafe and the trusting relationships that staff have built with them are an outstanding feature of the school.
- As pupils get older, the school does everything it can to help them keep themselves safe. They are encouraged to do things for themselves and make choices. Detailed risk assessments ensure that pupils are safe when they go out of school.
- Pupils are well supervised throughout the day, including at break times and during lunch. The high number of staff in Reception classes ensures that children can use outdoor equipment safely.
- The school is rigorous in making sure that staff and visitors have the appropriate checks before they work with pupils.
- Most pupils attend well although overall attendance is affected by unavoidable periods of absence for those pupils who have medical conditions.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly knowledgeable about each pupil's needs. Their enthusiasm gives pupils a love of learning.
- Teachers consistently plan well, taking pupils' previous achievement into account and carefully building small steps towards their individual targets. For example, one child in Reception had found and correctly identified two number shapes in a sand tray. The teacher then worked with him to identify which number was bigger.
- The high quality of planning ensures that all groups of pupils make the same excellent progress over time. This includes disadvantaged pupils, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and more-able pupils.
- Learning that was observed during lessons during this inspection, without exception, demonstrated teachers' very high expectations. This was further backed up with evidence from records of pupils' work and school data. As a result, many pupils make better than expected progress over time.
- Teachers use a wide range of methods to support pupils' communication, which includes signing, symbols, pictures, and information and communication technology. The school is determined to find the right communication aid to support each pupil and is currently trying new technologies so that some pupils can try different approaches.
- Teachers work very well with teaching assistants and together they prove a 'seamless' team in classrooms, adapting tasks as necessary according to pupils' responses. Teaching assistants are very confident in supporting learning and managing behaviour.
- Teachers reflect on how well they are doing and are willing to try new approaches and strategies in order to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result of teachers seeking to specialise in one type of need, they gain the skills they need to support fast and sustained progress.
- All teachers plan the next steps that pupils should make. While some give these to pupils in a way that

pupils can understand this is not consistent across the school.

- Many areas of the school provide a rich and stimulating environment to support current learning, but not all areas are of the same high standard.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- All pupils achieve exceptionally well from their starting points at the school. There are no differences in the achievement of pupils who are eligible for the additional funding and those who are not. The progress that each makes in English, mathematics and their personal development means that they are very well prepared for their next stage of education. School progress information shows that this has been consistent over the last three years.
- Older pupils work at their own level towards qualifications that recognise life skills, such as preparing a meal. This supports their move to college when they leave school, because they can complete the award there.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make outstanding progress because teachers and teaching assistants use their knowledge of the pupils to encourage participation. For example, in a Reception class pupils had boxes with different materials so that they could experience textures. The teacher knew that one pupil preferred to use his foot to experience the feel of some items.
- Pupils with severe learning difficulties make rapid progress. Some make rapid progress in reading by using the school approach that matches letters and combinations of letters to the sounds they make (phonics). This, together with regular reading practice and specialist support, means that more-able pupils can read and apply their skills to their writing.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make outstanding progress in their learning, including in their social development. In a Key Stage 4 lesson, for example, pupils made popcorn as part of an American themed project. One pupil asked each of the class in turn if they would like to try some, and each pupil was expected to reply with 'yes please' or 'no thank you'.
- All pupils make fast progress in mathematics as a result of excellent teaching. Teachers make very good links across the other subjects to support the skills learned in mathematics lessons.
- One parent wrote, 'my son is happy and confident at Hillside, he has progressed in tiny steps, always going forward.' This sums up the whole school.
- Some pupils attend local mainstream schools and staff who accompany them ensure that they continue to make excellent progress in those sessions.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The provision is outstanding because adults take every possible opportunity to get children ready for learning and teaching is outstanding. Consequently, children settle very quickly and happily into school.
- Children greet adults happily when they come into school. There are smiles, hugs and excited noises as they are brought into the classroom. Adults manage sometimes challenging behaviour with calmness and good humour and children take increasing responsibility for managing themselves.
- Reception children are taught together with Years 1 and 2 pupils and all benefit from the early years approach and make good progress. The school has worked hard to improve the outdoor areas. Children now have an exciting range of activities both in and out of the classroom, which help them to make good links with their learning.
- Children make great progress in their ability to participate and in their communication skills. Many are learning signing and symbols for the first time and they are quickly getting to grips with them. There are many opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, children enjoy saying hello to each other in the mornings, using a song and pictures of themselves.
- The early years provision is very well led and managed. Adults work extremely well together to help children make as fast progress as they can and to keep them safe.

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	114687
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	448151

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Tipler
Headteacher	Rachel Burstow
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2010
Telephone number	01273 416979
Fax number	01273 417512
Email address	office@hillside.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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