

High Park School

Thorn Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD9 6RY

Inspection dates

20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have not made sure they check that all staff are suitable to work in the school. This means they operate an unnecessary and unacceptable level of risk when recruiting adults to work with vulnerable children and young people.
- Governors have not checked properly that leaders are following statutory requirements. As a result, governors are failing in their statutory duties.
- The sixth form and early years parts of the school are inadequate because of the inadequate safeguarding checks and the risks these pose to children and learners in these parts of the school.
- Leaders' expectations of some pupils' progress in English and mathematics are too low because they are based on inaccurate assessments.
- Some teachers do not plan how they and other staff will support pupils to learn through the pupils' chosen activities, particularly in aspects of English and mathematics.
- Some most-able pupils do not get planned opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills and so do not make good progress in these areas.
- Leaders do not check the progress pupils make in some aspects of English and mathematics. This means they do not provide the necessary support staff need to develop their skills in teaching all aspects of these subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make strong gains in the development of their social communication and how they manage their feelings and reactions to their environment.
- The 'Learn and Play' programme provides support to children, their parents and mainstream settings. This helps children remain in mainstream nurseries and schools.
- Close work between other services and school staff enables learners to try out different activities available to them when they leave school. As a result, learners leaving post-16 provision go on to sustained packages of activities.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgent action must be taken by the local authority, leaders and governors to ensure that all staff are suitable to work in the school, including those appointed to work in the early years and sixth form, by:
 - checking that all staff have appropriate references confirming they are suitable for the roles they have in school and taking appropriate action if this is not the case
 - establishing and implementing a robust system that guarantees that all future new staff are recruited following the safer recruitment requirements for all schools
 - establishing and implementing robust monitoring by leaders and governors to ensure that checks on new staff are in place and the school's single central record accurately records that this is the case.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all checks carried out by leaders, and the information they give to governors, are accurate
 - governors check and challenge the information leaders give them to ensure that it is accurate.
- Improve the progress pupils and learners make in all aspects of English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - leaders establish a system of assessment that fully recognises the knowledge, skills and understanding all pupils and learners have in all aspects of English and mathematics
 - leaders and teachers agree appropriately challenging targets for pupils' and learners' progress in all aspects of English and mathematics, based on their individual starting points
 - teachers plan lessons and activities, giving guidance to all staff on how their interaction and interventions with pupils' and learners' chosen activities can be used to support progress in English and mathematics
 - teachers plan lessons and activities for appropriate pupils and learners that allow all staff to have a greater impact on pupils' learning
 - leaders check how well teachers and other staff ensure that pupils make more progress in English and mathematics and provide appropriate training and development for staff who struggle with this aspect of their role.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and governors do not ensure that they check staff are suitable to work in the school. Required checks, including references, are not routinely undertaken. Most identified missing references were obtained during the inspection. However, leaders cannot guarantee that all other staff have been appointed with references. This is negligent practice and shows poor risk assessment in a school with a high proportion of vulnerable pupils.
- The lack of rigour in governors' monitoring of safeguarding raises further concerns about the robustness of all checks undertaken by leaders and governors.
- Leaders have an over-optimistic view of the outcomes for pupils because the assessments of some pupils' English and mathematics skills are too low. As a result, leaders' expectations for some pupils' progress are not high enough, so pupils' gains in these areas require improvement.
- Leaders do not check the effectiveness of the teaching of English and mathematics skills, particularly emerging skills in reading, writing, number and the pupils' understanding of shapes and measures. As a result, they do not support staff to improve how these important skills are taught. Leaders are developing a method of identifying how pupils' 'special interests' can be used to develop basic skills alongside their social communication, but this is not in place.
- Leaders do check the difference that teachers and other staff make to pupils' social communication skills and emotional regulation (the school's preferred term for how pupils manage their feelings). These checks are thorough and result in effective development opportunities for all staff.
- Leaders have developed an approach to teaching, learning and assessment by merging a range of specialist approaches. This is solely focused on supporting the development of pupils' social communication and emotional regulation. Different subjects are taught across the school, based on an early years approach and whole-school termly themes. This works well for the youngest pupils but limits the experiences and opportunities for older pupils.
- Leaders have made significant changes in the organisation of staff over the last two years, increasing the number of teachers and making sure all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. In the priority areas of social communication and emotional regulation, staff development is effective and contributes to the positive outcomes for most pupils in these areas. Support for teachers, and expectations of them, including those newly qualified and middle leaders, are strong. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school and the contribution they make to the lives of pupils and their families.
- The sports premium is used effectively to train staff to deliver rebound therapy. As a result, pupils have regular access to this activity, which encourages fitness and self-regulation.
- The vast majority of parents overwhelmingly support the school and are pleased their children are getting support for their priority needs of social communication and emotional regulation. A very small number of parents expressed a concern that their children's progress in English and mathematics is not encouraged.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The local authority has not provided effective support to the school, as it previously required improvement and is now inadequate due to safeguarding concerns. During the inspection, the local authority's response to the identified safeguarding concerns indicated a lack of understanding about how the school functions and the implications for the safety of pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has not ensured that safeguarding requirements are met when new staff are appointed. The seriousness of this cannot be underestimated, as just under half the current staff have been appointed in the last two years.
 - The governing body is not robust when checking information governors are given by leaders or ensuring that duties to publish information on the school's website are met.
 - The governing body has professional skills and knowledge about pupils' special educational needs or disability. This supports the work of the school, especially in collaborative work with a host of other agencies and services involved in the pupils' lives.

- The governing body understands and challenges the use and impact of additional funding, including the pupil premium grant (additional money provided to support pupils who are disadvantaged). This includes purchasing additional time from speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, over and above that provided by the National Health Service.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Failure to check that new staff are suitable to work with vulnerable pupils at the school means leaders and governors do not meet statutory safeguarding requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Assessment of some pupils' English and mathematics skills is inaccurate and too low. This means that teachers do not always plan opportunities that appropriately challenge pupils to move on to their next steps in reading, writing, number skills, and understanding shapes and measures.
- Teachers, and other staff, do not always ensure that they interact with pupils and their chosen activities in a way that helps them progress. Some interactions seen risk further embedding isolating responses pupils have developed over time, rather than encouraging pupils to develop social responses.
- In some classes, particularly the class for the youngest pupils, some highly effective practice was seen. Teachers' and other staff's interactions with pupils' chosen activities, using different ways to support pupils' development of social communication and emotional regulation, and for a few pupils their emerging reading and writing skills, leads to pupils making strong progress.
- Teachers ensure that most pupils make significant gains in communicating with adults and, for a few, with other pupils. This is achieved through a range of approaches steered by each pupil's preferred communication method as a starting point. Speech and language therapists contribute significantly to the progress pupils make in this area. This is developed through direct work with pupils and through training for all staff.
- Teaching assistants, at all levels, play an essential role in ensuring pupils' progress. Most teaching assistants are highly skilled, especially in understanding pupils' emotional regulation and social communication needs. As a result, pupils make strong progress in these areas.
- Parents strongly support the methods teachers use. Parents appreciate the guidance and support they receive so they can continue using these approaches at home with their children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Pupils indicate that they feel safe in school through their responses to staff. However, inadequacies in leadership around key areas of safeguarding procedure mean that aspects of the school's promotion of welfare require urgent improvement.
- Staff ensure that the environment is safe and they provide a caring environment for pupils. This starts as soon as the pupils are admitted to the school by staff making home visits to establish positive relationships with parents. Leaders ensure that the daily arrival and departure of pupils is managed safely.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate risk assessments for the range of special activities, for example aromatherapy and rebound therapy, are in place and referred to by staff. The difficult issue of fire evacuation procedures is not avoided but practised so that pupils learn to tolerate such unsettling, but necessary, experiences.
- Older pupils are taught, at a level appropriate to their understanding, how to keep themselves safe. Work on understanding the private nature of some aspects of growing up is key and reinforced through a range of activities.
- Staff training on all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date. Leaders work with other agencies to secure the safety and well-being of vulnerable pupils. This is particularly the case for the relatively high proportion of children looked after by the local authority.

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is encouraged through a range of different themes. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, particularly through the support they receive to tolerate people who may be different to themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff support pupils to learn how to manage their feelings and responses to the world. Success for individual pupils is achieved because staff understand why pupils react as they do. Staff carefully engage with pupils to develop safer and less isolating ways to express themselves and manage the impact the world has on their senses.
- Inspectors saw examples of how staff sensitively support distressed or 'dysregulated' pupils, using skills they have learned from occupational therapists. Most staff understand how pupils' sensory needs impact on their emotional regulation.
- Leaders ensure that the use of physical interventions involving restraint are used appropriately by trained staff. The school's records show that over the last two years the number of incidents of physical interventions has reduced. This is due to the success of other approaches to support pupils' emotional regulation.
- Attendance is below the national average, declining from 2014 to 2015. Although current attendance is still at the 2015 level, case studies show that the current support for pupils' attendance is beginning to bring about positive change.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The information provided by leaders indicates that most pupils make expected or more than expected progress in English and mathematics. However, as some pupils are assessed below the level of skill they demonstrate, in aspects of English and mathematics, the school's evidence of progress is not convincing.
- The school's records show that some pupils have skills in English and mathematics that are not fully recognised in assessment information. As a result, leaders set targets for progress that are too low and lack high enough expectations for some pupils in some aspects of learning.
- Information about pupils' development of social communication and emotional regulation is convincing and supported by a range of evidence, including the views of parents. The vast majority of pupils make strong gains in these areas of learning.
- Progress from leaders' assessment of pupils' starting points is similar for all groups of pupils. However, inaccuracies in the assessment of some pupils, who for the most part are the most able in the school, mean that progress for this group is not as strong as it could be.
- Pupils and their families receive advice and guidance about opportunities when they leave school. All 2015 Year 11 pupils moved into the school's post-16 provision and all the school leavers from the post-16 provision have stayed with the packages of activities provided through adult social care and health agencies.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Leaders cannot guarantee that they have checked the suitability of staff working with children in the early years. Therefore safeguarding is not effective and the early years provision is inadequate.
- In other respects, early years provision is strong and makes a considerable impact on the children's development and the lives of their families.
- The lead teacher for the early years provision has a detailed knowledge of each child and ensures that the team of staff working with the children are fully involved in recording and assessing the small steps of progress they make.
- Children choose all their activities from the wide range of sensory-based opportunities spread across the provision. Staff interact and intervene with children as appropriate, challenging children's thinking by 'sabotaging' routine and ritualised responses to the materials provided.
- Work to support parents is appreciated, as it is effective. Staff spend time explaining to parents how they work and encourage parents to use the same approach at home. When parents do this, their children experience a consistency which helps their development.

- The local authority has commissioned the school to provide a 'Learn and Play' service for early years children with communication and interaction difficulties in mainstream nurseries. This 15-week programme for small groups of children, their parents and staff from mainstream settings is effective in helping children, and those who care for them, to develop positive learning skills and emotional regulation from an early age, so the children are better equipped to attend mainstream settings.

16 to 19 study programmes

are inadequate

- Leaders cannot guarantee that they have checked the suitability of staff working with post-16 learners. Therefore safeguarding is not effective and the provision for 16 to 19 study programmes is inadequate.
- Learners in the post-16 provision are placed in one of four groups, three of which include pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4. This means that all aspects of the 16 to 19 study programme are not experienced by all post-16 learners.
- The approach to teaching in post-16 provision is the same as in the rest of the school, based on an early years model with a termly theme. There are the same concerns for post-16 learners regarding the accuracy of assessment and their progress in English and mathematics, as described for the pupils of statutory school age.
- Ten out of the 17 learners have a planned programme of work-related learning through a vocational programme covering, for example, catering and horticulture. Teachers weave the development of English and mathematics skills through these subjects in a functional way, for example reading symbol-based recipe cards. In this way, most of the learners benefit from key aspects of the study programmes.
- Preparation for post-19 destinations is a strength of the school. Leaders work closely with agencies who make provision for learners post-19. This results in learners trying out a range of activities, including sailing and horse riding, so that packages of appropriate activities are in place when they leave school. At the present time, no local further education provision is available for learners. Leaders are working with one local college to try and secure this option for learners in the future.

School details

Unique reference number	135861
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10002172

This inspection 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 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Butterfield
Headteacher	Ann Andrew
Telephone number	01274 614092
Website	www.highpark.org.uk
Email address	office@highpark.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 November 2013

Information about this school

- High Park School provides education for pupils with communication and interaction difficulties. All the pupils have statements of special educational need or education, health and care plans. The vast majority of pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition and a significant number experience a range of other disabling conditions. All pupils are working significantly below age-related expectations.
- Just under half of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A slightly smaller proportion are from Asian British backgrounds, predominantly Pakistani. There are a very small number of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. For slightly less than half the pupils, their first language is not English.
- Since the last inspection there has been a significant change in the staff structure of the school. This has led to an increase in the number of teachers and a reduction in the number of teaching assistants. Just under half of the staff have joined the school since the last inspection.
- The school has a range of specialist facilities and employs additional therapy staff, including aromatherapists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The school health team works closely with the school.
- The local authority commissions the school to provide education to a small number of pupils not on roll at the school, but who are not attending any school setting.
- The local authority also commissions the school to provide a 'Learn and Play' service to support young children with communication and interaction difficulties who attend other schools and nurseries. This is to provide early help and support to the children, their parents and the schools and nurseries they attend.
- The school works with the Bradford District Achievement Partnership, a collaboration of special schools in Bradford.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made several visits to each of the bases and classrooms, jointly with leaders, to reduce the impact on pupils' anxiety and to understand leaders' view of the effectiveness of teaching. The visits to bases were for varying amounts of times and at different times throughout the two days. The arrangements for pupils' arrival and departure were observed, as were the pupils' dinner times.
- An inspector also visited the 'Learn and Play' provision and talked with a group of parents whose children attend the programme.
- Inspectors met with leaders and teachers to discuss their work, including those responsible for supporting pupils' behaviour and those responsible for safeguarding. A meeting with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors took place. An inspector spoke with the school's external consultant and a local authority representative.
- Sixty-eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey were considered, including 14 text comments. Twenty-one responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) and 12 text comments were considered.
- Pupil achievement files and assessment information were reviewed, alongside samples of positive behaviour plans and information relating to how staff support vulnerable pupils.
- Information and records relating to all aspects of the school's work were read and considered, including the single central record and samples of staff files.

Inspection team

Susan Hayter, lead inspector
Suzette Garland Grimes

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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