

Heathfield Special School

Oldbury Way, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3BN

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since his arrival, the inspirational executive headteacher has successfully moved the school forward. The effective senior leadership team are dedicated to ensuring that pupils achieve well. The school is rapidly improving.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan work to ensure that it matches pupils' needs. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly to check that pupils are challenged in their learning.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. They make exceptional progress in art.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. All who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents.
- Governors carry out their roles effectively. They ask challenging questions of leaders and effectively hold the school to account.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is excellently promoted. It is at the heart of the school's work. Staff effectively support pupils to understand and appreciate the school's aims and values.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils respond very well to the system of rewards. Pupils feel safe in the school.
- The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' learning about the natural world is deepened through the use of the well-equipped outdoor classroom.
- Assessment in English and mathematics is highly effective and is used to accurately track pupils' learning. However, assessment practice is still developing in other subjects such as science and music.
- The provision for the early years is good. Links with parents and local pre-schools are strong. While children make good progress overall, their progress is not as closely monitored as in the rest of the school. Sometimes, the work planned does not take into account children's interests.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the strong assessment practice that already exists in English and mathematics in other subjects such as science and music
- Ensure that in the early years, children's progress is clearly tracked, and learning activities are planned that focus on children's interests.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since his appointment, the executive headteacher has worked tirelessly to improve all aspects of the school's work. Under his careful guidance, a well-trained senior leadership team has been established which is focused on improving the school still further.
- The school is highly regarded by parents. All who responded to the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors would recommend the school to other parents. They are unanimous in their view that their children are well taught at this school.
- Effective support has been provided by the local authority. They have visited the school frequently to advise staff and monitor the rapid improvements that have been made.
- Those who are middle leaders perform their roles well. They regularly visit lessons and check work in pupils' books. Middle leaders effectively hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils within their areas of responsibility.
- The school makes effective use of additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. Money is carefully spent to ensure that all eligible pupils attend regularly and have the support they need to access the curriculum.
- Additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport premium is well used. Pupils have the opportunity to experience a range of activities that develop their coordination and balance. Effective use is made of the on-site hydrotherapy pool, where pupils have the opportunity to strengthen weak muscle groups.
- Additional funding for special educational needs is well used to provide therapists and meet the targets specified in pupils' education, health and care plans.
- The curriculum makes a powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It was totally reorganised after the executive headteacher's arrival and now provides pupils with an exciting range of topics and experiences. For example, during the inspection pupils were enjoying 'Wizard Week'. They wrote spells and created magic-themed art work. The school's exceptional outside classroom and pond-dipping area provides pupils with a large number of opportunities to learn about the natural world. There is a large range of extra-curricular clubs offered. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about developing their dancing and cookery skills.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Discussions with pupils indicated that concepts such as respect and tolerance were particularly well understood. Pupils have a clear understanding of democracy and even knew some of the policies that had been discussed during the recent general election.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong. The newly formed federation works effectively to ensure that there is good support and challenge for school leaders. Governors bring a valuable set of skills and experience to their roles. Individuals hold specific responsibilities related to their skills, such as in finance.

- Governors have a clear strategic oversight. They regularly monitor procedures and policies and ensure that aspects related to their statutory duties are compliant.
- Governors have a good understanding of the difference that has been made to pupils' outcomes through the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and PE and sports premium.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's priority is to ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after, and so it engages very well with parents and a range of stakeholders. Parents are unanimous in their view that their children feel safe at this school. When asked, pupils said that they felt safe and secure.
- Staff and governors are very clear about the additional vulnerabilities of the pupils in this school. All know what to do if a pupil is at risk because they have been well trained.
- The school's safeguarding policy is thorough. The single central record that checks the suitability of staff is regularly reviewed. There are effective systems in place to ensure that swift action is taken if there are any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff are highly sensitive to the needs of pupils. They plan work that carefully takes into account what pupils already know and understand. This ensures that pupils' skills are carefully developed to enable them to make good progress.
- When pupils join the school, staff make accurate assessments of their starting points and areas where there are gaps in their knowledge. Regular assessments of progress during the year ensure that staff quickly identify any pupil who is not making rapid progress. Senior leaders and staff work closely together to develop strategies that will support learning and help these pupils to increase their rates of progress.
- Teaching for those who have limited communication skills is highly attuned to each pupil's needs. Staff are well trained and ensure that the most effective communication method for each pupil is provided. Photographic records show that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects because the individually tailored tasks are interesting and challenging.
- Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers. They work hard in lessons to complete set activities and further investigations. Work provided is challenging, including for those who are most able.
- Teaching in art is exceptional. Pupils excel in developing their skills in painting, pottery and model-making. Those who are most able create art that shows a fine understanding of colour and how to use paint to express mood. For example, pupils showed good skills at painting in the style of Monet. In many instances, the use of colour, shading and brushwork was exceptional.
- Assessment practice in English and mathematics is strong in all classes. However, the school is yet to develop this effective practice in other areas of the curriculum such as

science and music.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff are diligent in helping pupils to develop their interpersonal skills. For example, one of the school's values is encouragement. During the inspection each pupil had a booklet that recorded every time they encouraged another pupil. Often booklets were almost full of examples. For many pupils, encouraging another pupil, whether in their work or socially, represented an exceptional level of self-confidence and maturity.
- Throughout the school, staff have strong relationships with pupils. In lessons there is a culture of trust and pupils often return to tasks because they want to please their teacher. Over time, staff give pupils a clear understanding about how to be a successful learner.
- The school provides an extensive range of additional support and care for those who need it. This ensures that pupils are well looked after and flourish.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since the arrival of the executive headteacher, behavioural incidents have reduced considerably. This is because he introduced a popular reward scheme for good work and behaviour. Pupils across the school are highly motivated to gain stars and move on to the next level.
- The behaviour of those whose behaviour is more challenging, such as those who have social, emotional and mental health needs, has also improved. One reason for this is that leaders carefully analyse behavioural incidents. For example, they realised that behaviour on Mondays was often not as good as during the rest of the week. After introducing 'no pencil Mondays', behaviour has improved considerably throughout the week.
- Around the school, pupils conduct themselves well. They hold open doors for visitors and are happy to talk about their school. In lessons, behaviour is also good. Classrooms are orderly places of learning.
- The attendance of pupils is lower than the national average. Leaders are rigorous in following up absence. Records show that often absence is associated with pupils' medical needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in a wide range of subjects. This is because when they start at this school there is a thorough assessment of their academic, social, communication and personal needs. Staff carefully identify what pupils need to do to reach the targets in their education, health and care plans.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their communication skills. For those with limited communication, the school carefully identifies each pupil's preferred communication strategy. Well-trained staff then make use of this strategy throughout the day. Parents report that they are delighted with the results because their child develops the skills to manage their emotional responses and make academic progress.
- Well over three quarters of the pupils at this school make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. For those who are not progressing rapidly, staff provide additional, tailored support.
- In writing, pupils' books show that they enjoy developing their handwriting skills. Work in books shows pupils use an increasingly large vocabulary and growing understanding of punctuation when they are writing.
- Pupils' phonics skills are well developed. They use these skills to work out how to read unfamiliar words. Pupils say they enjoy reading, and proudly showed inspectors the book reviews they had written.
- Mathematics skills are carefully developed. For example, some pupils have recently learned about capacity and have tested out their ideas.
- Disadvantaged pupils often make better progress than others with similar starting points. This is because additional funding is very carefully targeted to meet their needs and overcome any barriers to learning.
- Pupils are given the encouragement by staff to try out new experiences. In swimming, for example, nearly all pupils last year developed greater water confidence and many learned to swim.
- The few most-able pupils receive effective help to make good progress and develop their skills. Highly individualised support means that they are given work that is frequently challenging. For example, in mathematics pupils use complex calculations to solve problems.
- Parents are pleased with the progress their children make, typical comments include: 'My child's language and understanding have significantly improved and the progress they have made with reading has been incredible.'
- Pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development. They successfully develop their independence during trips and visits, some of which are residential. The school is successful in making a significant difference to pupils' resilience and determination to succeed. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- As a result of good teaching, children make strong progress from their individual starting points in all areas of learning. Staff ensure that effective use is made of additional funding so that disadvantaged children also make rapid progress.
- The foundations for developing each child's communication skills are started as soon as children start school. As a result, most make good progress in developing these skills and are, therefore, well prepared for their learning in Year 1. Last year some children achieved the early learning goal in listening and attention, and technology.
- Parents are very positive about the early years. They say that their children quickly settle into the school's routines, and that staff make every effort to understand each child's needs. Children feel safe and secure. They usually behave well. If there is any challenging behaviour it is effectively managed by staff.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form strong relationships with the children, who are encouraged, from the start, to learn and play alongside each other, taking turns and sharing resources fairly.
- Children typically make good progress across a range of subjects. However, leaders do not map progress as carefully as in the rest of the school. This means that occasionally progress slows. Additionally, staff do not always take into account children's interests when planning learning. Consequently, some activities do not fully capture children's imagination.

School details

Unique reference number	116607
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10032905

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chair	June Goble & Colin Knight
Executive Headteacher	Steve Hollinghurst
Telephone number	01329 845150
Website	www.heathfield.hants.sch.uk
Email address	s.hollinghurst@heathfield.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Heathfield Special School provides education for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, with an increasing proportion of pupils who have severe learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional needs associated with autistic spectrum disorder, speech, language and communication needs, or physical and sensory impairments.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school is composed of 11 classes. There are three classes for those with more complex needs, with most of these pupils having little or no verbal skills. Currently, the school has a specially resourced class for pupils whose primary need is associated with autistic spectrum disorder combined with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- In December 2015 the headteacher of St Francis Special School in Fareham, became

the interim executive headteacher of this school. In April 2017, this school federated with St Francis Special School. Both schools now share a governing body and an executive headteacher.

- Children in the early years attend on a full-time basis.
- Over half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school works in partnership with a range of external agencies including: speech and language therapists; health and social care professionals; physiotherapists; occupational therapists; audiologists; and paediatricians.
- The school uses a variety of alternative and augmentative communication systems, which provide extra ways of helping pupils who find it hard to communicate by speech or writing.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. The majority of the observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, staff, parents, governors and the local authority's representative.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work in their books and talked to pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at this school.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed relating to safeguarding, assessment, target-setting, pupils' progress, and the performance management of staff. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors took into account the 26 responses from parents, together with many free-text comments, which were submitted to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil survey.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Bulmer	Ofsted Inspector

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