

Torfield School

Croft Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3JT

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Outstanding leadership at all levels has resulted in the school providing the very best education for its pupils. The executive headteacher and the head of school have established a highly effective team. The school has made rapid progress since it opened.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make excellent progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. Pupils develop their communication skills rapidly. All groups of pupils achieve equally well.
- Pupils' reading skills are exceptionally well developed and they develop a love of reading. Pupils make strong progress in improving their writing skills, and make outstanding progress in their understanding of mathematics.
- Those responsible for governance, including the academy board of directors and the advisory board, provide strong support and challenge.
- Provision in the specialist classes is outstanding. Teachers carefully build learning on what pupils already know.
- Effective leadership in the early years ensures that no opportunity is lost in developing children's skills in all areas of learning. Children make rapid progress in the early years.
- The personal development of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Every opportunity is taken for pupils to develop an understanding of themselves and others.
- Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. The quality of assessment is highly effective. Learning is planned that precisely matches pupils' needs.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are kept safe. Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough.
- Systems for tracking academic and personal progress are not linked together. Hence it is not always easy for the school to evaluate a pupils' overall performance and refine the support provided further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Link the tracking of pupils' personal development to academic progress, so that it is easier to monitor pupils' overall performance and provide even better support where required.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school excels in achieving its aim of promoting pupils' independence. All who work at this school have the highest aspirations for pupils. Staff are continually striving to improve even further. They work closely with the other school in the trust to share their expertise.
- Parents are delighted with the school. They praise how the school develops the self-confidence of their children. One parent commented, 'The time my child has been at the school has been excellent.' All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.
- Leaders at all levels excel in their roles. They are meticulous in their attention to detail. Procedures for monitoring and improving staff performance are effective. This ensures that pupils receive excellent teaching.
- The design of the curriculum carefully meets individual pupils' needs. Pupils acquire basic skills in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. Subjects such as music, geography and design technology are all carefully taught. There is a strong focus on developing communication skills. Pupils experience a wide range of opportunities. Life skills and an understanding of emotions are carefully interwoven into subjects. For example, when pupils were studying the Battle of Hastings they thought about the anxieties a soldier might feel before battle.
- Leaders place a high priority on the development of pupils' physical skills. All playgrounds have equipment that promotes the development of stronger muscle groups. Climbing frames, running machines and trampolines are well used at every playtime. Staff ensure that pupils stay safe when using this equipment. All pupils benefit from using the school's own swimming pool and many have learned to swim. Physical education and sports premium funding is well spent. A specialist teacher supports school sports activities. These are extremely popular and ensure that a larger number of pupils are active during the day.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their creative skills. For example, in art pupils have explored famous artists, such as Monet, painting skilfully in his style, using just the right colours and textures. Pupils' musical skills are well developed. Pupils take part in singing events, often in front of large audiences. They enjoy playing instruments such as glockenspiels and chime bars.
- There are many extra-curricular activities that help pupils to broaden their experiences. When asked, pupils said the activities were 'brilliant'. For example, in science club pupils enjoyed exploring the principles of flight by watching how paper falls through the air.
- Special educational needs funding for all pupils is well spent. It ensures that they get the best teaching and support to do well. The additional pupil premium funding is carefully spent. It is successful in achieving its aim of ensuring that disadvantaged pupils do well. Barriers to learning are removed because these pupils receive excellent teaching.

Governance of the school

- Those responsible for governance are committed to the school. They perform their roles thoroughly. They are highly experienced in aspects such as finance, business and education. As a result, they are able to hold the school to account across a range of areas. Both the board of directors and the advisory board ensure that the school is constantly challenged to keep on improving. Financial management is rigorous. At the heart of governance is the desire to provide the best for all pupils.
- Governors are reflective of their own practice. They have produced meticulous evaluations of their own performance. They have clear action plans for the future.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety is the top priority. Staff make sure pupils have the skills to stay safe both in school and in the wider world. Pupils know how to keep safe when travelling. Pupils have received detailed training on keeping safe while using the internet. They understand that to stay safe they do not give out personal information to strangers or agree to meet them.
- The school has excellent links with a range of different agencies. They meet regularly to ensure that each pupil has the care and support they need to thrive. Staff receive effective training and know what to do if they become aware of abuse or neglect.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers and learning assistants provide an exceptional level of support. Staff undertake a detailed assessment of pupils' skills when they enter the school. They ensure that pupils receive work precisely targeted to their needs. They set challenging targets. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress.
- Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of both pupils' personal and academic development. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils want to please their teachers. They enjoy their time in lessons because they find the activities so interesting. Pupils persevere in completing activities even when they initially find them hard.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's learning. They are regularly invited into school and correspond through the home-school link books. Parents are happy that their children have interesting projects to do when at home.
- Pupils' progress in lessons is carefully evaluated by staff. In all classes, photographic records of pupils' learning over time are recorded. Staff note the progress made and the next step the pupil needs to learn.
- No chance is missed to develop pupils' communication skills. In lessons and around the school, staff are constantly communicating with pupils. They excel at keeping pupils engaged and on task. In speech and language therapy sessions, pupils have exciting tasks to complete. The impact of this is that pupils make rapid progress in communicating effectively.

- Teaching in the specialist classes is equally outstanding. Pupils benefit from a range of multi-sensory experiences. These stimulate pupils' interests and imagination.
- Staff ensure that learning takes place around the school, not just in classrooms. Corridors are full of interesting facts and displays. Examples of pupils' work in subjects such as art and history are proudly on display.
- Learning support assistants have received high-quality training. They know the pupils exceptionally well. They play a significant role in developing pupils' social, communication and language skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff gently support pupils to unlock their learning potential. They help pupils to become confident in their abilities. As a result, pupils flourish and have a pride in their work.
- One of the main aims of the school is to help pupils to develop a self-belief in their capabilities. Every member of staff works towards achieving this aim. Pupils say that they now do things that they thought were much too hard at first.
- Pupils feel valued as learners. Leaders regularly ask their views to find out what they enjoy about the school. British values are carefully taught. Pupils know about democracy and vote for members of the school council.
- All pupils who spoke to inspectors say they feel safe at the school. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue. They say that staff have taught them about the different forms of bullying and their dangers. They feel confident that staff would quickly sort out any problems or concerns.
- Pupils have had extensive training on how to stay safe on the internet. They know that they have to be very careful when online and not to give out personal information.
- Pupils enjoy developing their independence. They learn about how to travel safely. Trips, such as the week-long residential at an activity centre, help pupils to become more confident in unfamiliar surroundings.
- The school has a very detailed system of tracking pupils' personal development. Skills such as being a good learner or friend are meticulously tracked. However, at present this is not linked to the tracking of pupils' academic development. Hence it is not always easy to check a pupil's overall performance. The school has already identified this as a next step to develop.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is a calm and orderly place where pupils enjoy learning and making friends.
- In classrooms, behaviour is often impeccable. Pupils usually have excellent attitudes to their learning, including listening carefully. They are encouraged and supported by

teachers and learning support assistants to 'have a go' at activities. This was illustrated when pupils wrote lengthy descriptions of their favourite book.

- The school grounds offer an exciting learning environment. Pupils have the chance to share climbing equipment or use the individual trampolines. These experiences encourage good turn-taking skills.
- Some pupils, including those who are new to the school, display anxieties and challenging behaviours. The school's approach to dealing with behavioural issues is highly effective. Issues are dealt with calmly. Teachers help pupils to talk about why they behaved in a certain way and help pupils to realise the impact of their behaviour on others. This ensures that those pupils who find it harder to make the right choices improve their behaviour over time.
- Attendance has significantly improved and is now close to that of all schools nationally. Regular multi-agency team meetings ensure that if a pupil's attendance is low, their family is well supported to help them improve. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced and are now exceptionally rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From often very low starting points, most pupils make exceptional progress across a range of subjects and skills. For example, almost all pupils develop strong communication skills and most become confident in speaking and listening. Some have made exceptional progress in their understanding of signs and symbols.
- Progress in mathematics is outstanding. For example, in just one year pupils often progress from counting to five to adding and subtracting numbers up to 100. Pupils develop an accurate understanding of time. They use this knowledge in subjects such as history, where they use a timeline to show what happened on certain dates. Those who are most able develop the skills to select their own mathematical resources and solve problems.
- Pupils make excellent progress in reading. This is because staff make sure that pupils regularly practise their understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Parents make a valuable contribution to helping pupils learn to read. Many listen to their children reading on most nights. Many pupils take the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) check. Outcomes show that most pupils make significant progress over time. The most able pupils can talk knowledgeably about the fiction and non-fiction books they have read. They are able to discuss the styles of different authors.
- Almost all pupils make exceptional progress in their writing. In a year, pupils often progress from forming letters to being able to write in short sentences. The most able pupils have written detailed accounts of the books they have read.
- Disadvantaged pupils do very well. Leaders and staff check on their progress and put in place effective strategies if their progress starts to slow.
- Science skills are well developed. Pupils conduct experiments and carefully record the results. They learn to think scientifically and observe carefully. For example, pupils have developed an accurate understanding of teeth by looking in a mirror at their own

teeth, and comparing them with large models of the mouth and gums.

- In the specialist classes, pupils make strong progress in their personal development: they learn how to sit and stay focused on a task. Many develop their understanding of signs and symbols. Pupils show good skills at letter recognition and in understanding numbers.
- Those who enter and leave the school at different times during the year make strong progress from their starting points. This is because teachers accurately assess their skills on entry to the school. Work provided helps pupils to build rapidly on their skills.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Pupils in the early years make outstanding progress from their low starting points. Sensitive transition arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and feel safe. Staff make a careful assessment of each child's skills and abilities soon after they start. Staff then plan learning activities that match each child's needs.
- Children make exceptional progress in the early years. Progress is particularly strong in communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make exceptional progress due to the way that additional funding is used. Staff target resources thoughtfully to remove any barriers to learning.
- The outside area has been particularly well designed to provide multi-sensory experiences. The large play boat and music area stimulates children's imaginations effectively.
- Children in the specialist class receive effective support. No chance is lost in developing their communication skills. Staff constantly talk with children and engage them in the activities provided.
- Leadership in the early years is exceptionally strong. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that children settle quickly and get the support they need. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of care that their children receive.
- Teachers and learning support assistants build trusting relationships with children. This helps children to feel safe and secure. In lessons, children behave exceptionally well. They quickly learn to sit still and listen carefully to the teacher.
- Teaching is excellent because of the well-planned individual programmes that are made for each child. These help them to quickly progress to their next steps. Teachers select activities that fascinate children. For example, children enjoyed labelling the head, legs and arms on a life-sized poster of a child.

School details

Unique reference number	141476
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10036813

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jenny Smith
Executive Headteacher	Executive Headteacher - Richard Preece Head of school – Natalie Shuttleworth
Telephone number	01424 428228
Website	www.torfield-saxonmount.com
Email address	torfieldoffice@tasmata.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Torfield School became an academy in 2014. When its predecessor school, Torfield School, was last inspected by Ofsted, in December 2013, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school provides education for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils have needs associated with autistic spectrum disorders. Many have additional difficulties relating to communication and social, emotional and mental health. A few have visual and physical needs. Almost all pupils

have an education, health and care plan. A few are currently awaiting a plan.

- The school is based on two sites. There are currently two combined early years and Year 1 classes, which also include a small number of Year 2 pupils who have higher levels of need. These are based at Parker Road Early Years Centre, within the campus of a mainstream primary school. There are five classes at Croft Road. In most classes pupils are grouped according to their age and abilities. When they leave Torfield, most pupils transition to Saxon Mount Secondary Special School.
- Approximately 20% of the pupils in the school have more complex needs. There are two specialist classes for these pupils, one at each site.
- Approximately three quarters of the pupils are male. A large number of pupils enter and leave the school at times other than the beginning of the school year.
- Around half of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is well above the national average.
- The school works with a range of outside agencies. These include health and social care professionals.
- In 2012, the school federated with Saxon Mount Secondary Special School. In 2014, both schools converted to become part of the Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust. The headteacher of Saxon Mount became the executive headteacher of both schools. He is also the chief executive officer of the academy trust.
- Both schools are accountable to a single federated governing body. The governing body is composed of a board of directors and an advisory board which supports their work.
- The school has established a partnership with the University of Brighton to provide for specialist postgraduate teacher training.
- The school currently does not place pupils in any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 14 lessons in a range of subjects across the school. The majority of visits were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- There were meetings with staff, the executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection to find out their views about the school. Inspectors examined pupils' work when they visited classrooms and listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read aloud.
- Inspectors checked documents on safeguarding, assessment and pupils' progress. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Parents were spoken to at the beginning and end of the school day. The views expressed by seven parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were also taken into account.
- The inspectors interviewed those responsible for governance. Their views were sought in a conference call with the chair of the board of directors and a meeting with other members of the board. There was a meeting with a representative from the advisory board. The lead inspector also looked at minutes from recent academy committee meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the responses from the five members of staff who responded to the online survey.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Simon Yates

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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