

Inspection of a school judged Good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hamilton Lodge School and College for Deaf Children

Walpole Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 0LS

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

Outcome

Hamilton Lodge School and College for Deaf Children has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely positive about Hamilton Lodge. They think that it is a friendly place where they feel safe. Poor behaviour does not interfere with their learning because staff have consistently high expectations, in and outside of the classroom. The school is a nurturing environment. Pupils mostly get on with each other well, though do acknowledge that relationships can be strained on occasion. The school has a range of values that pupils and staff aspire to. Kindness sits at the heart of these.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high. Staff care about pupils and want them to succeed. In return, pupils care about staff. Because of this, trusting relationships are formed and pupils across all phases of the school thrive, both academically and in developing their life skills.

Pupils are welcoming to visitors. They feel that they will have many happy memories when they leave the school. They revel in the challenges that events such as sports day bring. They are sad about fellow pupils who leave. Their compassion for each other shines through in a way that is difficult to put into words. This is clearly a special place to be for pupils and staff alike.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is a school that has maintained its standards over time, despite a period of uncertainty in the recent past. Evolving leadership and a period of restructuring have not impacted negatively on the quality of education the school provides. The school's

'independence curriculum' is noteworthy. Teaching pupils the life skills that they need outside of school is a particularly strong aspect of provision.

The curriculum is evolving in light of the changing cohorts of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend. Leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that the curriculum is more closely sequenced between each phase of the school. Despite this, the current curriculum has adequate breadth, with a clear focus on preparing pupils for life after Hamilton Lodge. This is most effective in the school's post-16 provision. Partnerships with local colleges are also strong. Because of this, students achieve a wide range of meaningful qualifications and are well prepared for their next steps on leaving the school.

Classrooms are industrious places. Developing pupils' communication skills sits at the heart of day-to-day work. Teachers have secure subject knowledge across the varied subjects they teach. They have a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. This allows them to modify the curriculum content appropriately so that pupils learn the skills and knowledge they need. Support staff are particularly skilled in their work with pupils who lack confidence or who need additional clarification about aspects of learning.

Pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly identified. This is particularly the case with pupils' language and literacy skills. An expert multi-disciplinary team of staff work together when pupils need extra help or when additional needs are identified. Specialist support is also available through partnerships with other special schools. Consequently, pupils' individual needs are met well. As a result, they make appropriate progress through the curriculum.

The school's wider curriculum broadly matches that of the national curriculum. Deaf studies and the school's 'SPACE' programme (social, personal and citizenship education) are particularly effective in developing pupils' resilience, confidence and self-esteem. They have a good understanding of life in modern Britain and in the world beyond. Aspects such as developing pupils' understanding of equalities and the protected characteristics have high importance.

Work to help develop the key qualities that will prepare pupils well for employment and independent living has a high profile. Pupils learn the important skills that will allow them to work with a range of people and access the services they need over time. Learning to drive, budgeting and booking medical appointments are all part of this. Pupils become increasingly confident as a result of these activities. However, the school's careers programme in key stages 3 and 4 is not as effective as it is for older students.

Responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff survey were broadly very positive. Staff enjoy working here and are proud to be part of the school community. A small amount of negativity was expressed around the recent consultation and subsequent restructuring exercise that is currently under way. Those in positions of governance are aware of this and working closely with leaders to guarantee the future of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some cases, pupils' learning pathways are not as well defined as they could be as they move through the school. Links between key stage 4 and the school's post-16 curriculum offer need to be refined further. The school needs to ensure that pupils' learning pathways are clearer, and their knowledge and skills build more consistently over time.
- The careers education provided for pupils in the secondary phase is in the early stages of development. As a result, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not learn about potential career opportunities as well as they might. The school should ensure that it strengthens its careers education so that all pupils have the information and experiences they need to be well prepared for their first steps into employment.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114619
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10341348
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Newbury
Principal	Lorraine Slee
Website	www.hamiltonlsc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a non-maintained, residential special school for deaf pupils. The school also caters for pupils with a wide range of additional SEND. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is currently led by an interim principal, with a head of school and a head of care with oversight of the respective school and residential provisions. The residential provision was not included in this inspection of the school's education provision.
- Though registered for pupils in the age range five to 19, at the time of the inspection there were no pupils attending in key stages 1 or 2.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the acting chair and two other members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons across the school, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met and talked to pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about their school. The lead inspector also met formally with a representative group of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gavin Thomas

His Majesty's Inspector

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