



# Hillside Special School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124903  
**LEA** SUFFOLK LEA  
**Inspection number** 281831  
**Inspection dates** 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ms. Margaret Goodchild LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Hitchcock Place
<b>School category</b>	Community special		CO10 6NN
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 372808
<b>Number on roll</b>	68	<b>Fax number</b>	01787 375249
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs. Pauline Lucas
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Sue Upson

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281831
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Hillside is a special school for pupils, aged 3 to 19 years, who have severe learning difficulties. There are no post-16 students on the school roll at present, however, and very few pupils in Years 10 and 11. In addition to their severe learning difficulties, many pupils have medical, sensory or behavioural needs. A fifth of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and half have autistic spectrum disorders. The school serves the towns of Sudbury and Haverhill and their surrounding villages, and all pupils come from White British backgrounds. Children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis while their needs are assessed, some remain at the school, others move on to mainstream schools or to other special schools.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Senior managers believe that this is a good school with some very good features. Inspection findings support parents' views that this is an outstanding school that provides good value for money. Pupils are cared for extremely well and make outstanding progress in their personal development. They achieve exceptionally well because much of the teaching is outstanding. The school provides exceptionally well for children in the Foundation Stage, and uses its links with the community and with other schools to enrich pupils' learning experiences. It provides extremely well for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress overall, especially in their personal and social development, but learning activities are not always matched closely enough to the individual needs of these pupils. Although the school has experienced some staffing difficulties since the last inspection, significant improvement has been made since the appointment of the current headteacher just over a year ago. The headteacher provides exceptionally clear direction and has high expectations for the school. Teamwork between the staff is strong and there is a shared commitment to making the school as good as possible. Although there is a need to develop further the role of subject co-ordinators and to refine aspects of the way the school evaluates its effectiveness. The school is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the tracking of progress made by pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and ensure that assessment information is used thoroughly in planning lessons for these pupils. - Develop further the role of subject co-ordinators and ensure that subjects are monitored frequently enough to provide up-to-date information about school effectiveness.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The nature of pupils' difficulties means that standards are necessarily well below the national average but pupils achieve exceptionally well overall. Children in the Foundation Stage make outstanding progress and many are successful in moving on to mainstream primary schools. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress towards meeting challenging targets and some exceed what is expected within their statements of special educational needs. Pupils make exceptionally good progress in literacy, moving on as soon as they can from using symbols to compose simple sentences to developing handwriting skills and producing longer pieces of writing. As they move through the school, they also gain a range of skills in mathematics that build very effectively on what they already know. Information and communication technology makes a significant contribution to their learning. Pupils achieve exceptionally well in art, where they produce high quality work, some of which has been exhibited locally. Pupils with severe learning difficulties and with autistic spectrum disorders achieve

exceptionally well. The progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is generally good but could be improved further. Higher attaining pupils are given excellent opportunities to integrate into mainstream schools and are thoroughly supported to ensure that they fulfil their potential.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are exceptionally good. Pupils are happy and confident because they are made to feel valued and develop high self-esteem. Parents say that their children love coming to school, and this is reflected in a rate of attendance that is good for a school of this type. Pupils enjoy warm and trusting relationships with the adults who work with them and as they get older, some show a high level of sensitivity to one another. Behaviour is good and the behavioural difficulties of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are managed exceptionally well. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral and cultural development and exceptionally good progress in their social development. Pupils learn to stay healthy and take part in a range of physical activities within and beyond the school day. It is clear that they feel safe and enjoy all that the school has to offer. They benefit a great deal from their involvement in the community and from opportunities to take part in activities with other schools. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible and have increasing opportunities to make decisions for themselves. The very positive relationships that they develop with others and the progress they make in basic skills stand them in very good stead for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching is nearly always at least good and a substantial amount is of very high quality. Teaching is outstanding in the Nursery, where planning reflects a thorough knowledge of national guidelines for children of this age and children's progress is recorded in great detail. Teaching is outstanding in art, where pupils have opportunities to work experimentally with a range of materials and techniques. Throughout the school, learning experiences are generally matched carefully to the needs of individual pupils and in many lessons teachers' expectations are high. Teachers are highly skilled in meeting the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and where teaching is at its best, these pupils are focused and captivated learners. Planning for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is not always matched sufficiently to pupils' individual targets, however, but rather more around the organisation of an activity. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and contribute significantly to pupils' progress. Teachers keep effective records of pupils' progress and increasingly involve pupils in assessing how well they have done. Parents are closely involved in their children's learning and are kept very well informed.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides pupils with a range of learning opportunities that are exceptionally relevant to the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Wherever possible, staff seek placements in mainstream schools for pupils who are capable of succeeding in that setting for some of their time. This contributes a great deal to their achievement. Although the curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good overall, there is scope to develop it further to ensure learning experiences are closely matched to pupils' individual targets and to the next steps in their learning. The range of learning experiences in the nursery is excellent. Outstanding enrichment opportunities, including links with the local community, contribute significantly to pupils' academic achievement and personal development to provide pupils with a wide range of exciting activities. The school welcomes a large number of visitors who broaden pupils' horizons. It has developed close links with other local schools, including mainstream primary and secondary schools, which greatly extend the social and academic opportunities open to pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides a high level of care for its pupils. Throughout the school, staff show considerable sensitivity in their interactions with pupils and each pupil is known as an individual. Teachers and senior managers are increasingly using information about what pupils can do to check their progress as well as to set individual targets. Arrangements for protecting pupils and ensuring their health and safety are thorough, and the school works closely with outside agencies and therapists. Pupils receive excellent support and guidance when they begin integrating into mainstream schools or move on to college at the end of their time at Hillside. The school's development of 'social stories' to improve the behaviour of individual pupils, following precise diagnosis of their difficulties, is an example of exemplary practice. This innovative approach involves parents closely and is leading to clear improvements in pupils' behaviour at home as well as within school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Although the school has experienced some staffing difficulties since the last inspection, significant improvement has been made since the appointment of the current headteacher just over a year ago. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and direction for the school and has high expectations. The role of the newly appointed deputy headteacher is developing well, and senior managers have a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. From their monitoring, senior staff know that much of the school's practice is very good although they are not yet entirely confident in identifying those aspects of practice that are outstanding. Co-ordinators check teaching, planning and pupils' progress in their subjects and

provide good support to their colleagues. Individual subjects are not reviewed frequently enough, however, and the school, rightly, recognises the need to develop further the role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating its work. Teachers and support staff have good opportunities to develop their skills through training. Governors work closely with staff and provide good support and challenge to senior managers. The school increasingly seeks the views of parents and others involved in the life of the school and responds effectively to their ideas. The Parents' and Friends' Association is very active in its support for the school and parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school. Many parents cannot praise it enough. Outstanding links with other schools contribute significantly to pupils' academic achievement and personal development. The school is very well staffed, well resourced and the accommodation provides effectively for pupils' needs. It provides good value for money and is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I enjoyed my visit to your school very much and would like to thank you for making me feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things that I saw in your school. You are lucky to go to such a good school where people get on so well together and where there is such a happy atmosphere. A lot of the teaching is extremely good and teachers make the learning fun. Those of you with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders are making exceptionally good progress. Those of you with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress overall, especially in your personal and social development, but sometimes teachers could use information about each of you a bit more when planning your lessons. Your school is exceptionally good because the headteacher has high expectations and all the staff work together to improve it for you. The staff who look after each subject work very hard but the school knows that it now needs to improve the way that subjects are managed. Keep being kind to one another and enjoy the rest of your time at Hillside Special School.