



# Harlow Fields School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131838  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 282264  
**Inspection dates** 20 October 2005 to 21 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Declan McCarthy LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Tendring Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		CM18 6RN
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01279423670
<b>Number on roll</b>	121	<b>Fax number</b>	01279431412
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Rev.Brian Surtees
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Tim Miller

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 20 October 2005 - 21 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 282264
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a school for pupils aged three to 19 with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, 123 pupils attend the school, including three children in the nursery and reception class and 18 students at Post-16. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. All have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Nearly all pupils are of white British heritage and live in Harlow and surrounding areas. About a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year and the school is due to be re-organised as a 'New Model Special School' in line with Essex County policy.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The inspection agrees with the school's own view of its performance. This is a school that provides a sound education for its pupils. The headteacher has made a good start in using self-evaluation to improve the school and he is well supported by the senior management team. He enjoys the confidence of the majority of parents, who are pleased with the school. He is working hard to restore good relationships with those very few parents who have continued to express concerns about the school since its previous inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Teaching and teachers' use of assessment are satisfactory and, as a result, pupils make satisfactory progress. The very few children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. Older pupils and students in Post-16 make good progress in their accredited courses. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autism make good progress because they are helped effectively by support staff, including therapists and medical professionals. Pupils' personal development, the curriculum and the quality of care are good. Consequently, pupils are happy at school, behave well and are enthusiastic in their learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The headteacher has established good relationships with outside agencies and has the confidence of nearly all parents. He has re-structured the senior management team who share his vision for improvement. The curriculum is now well developed and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to support teaching and learning have improved. These are raising pupils' achievements. However, subject co-ordinators and governors have yet to fully develop their monitoring roles or in supporting the school to move forward. There are also weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of how to use the assessment systems for target setting and the reporting of progress to parents.

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

- Strengthen monitoring of teaching across the school so that it improves pupils' progress. - Ensure that subject co-ordinators and governors develop their management and strategic roles to further improve provision. - Refine teachers' use of assessment for target setting and the reporting of pupil's progress to parents, so that targets are more realistic and achievable, and parents know how much progress their children make.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils make good progress towards their targets in their individual education plan (IEP) targets. Pupils with more complex needs such as autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress as a result of the good support they receive from well qualified and experienced support staff and therapists. They make good use of communication aids and electronic switches to ensure that these pupils learn effectively in lessons. Progress in individual subjects,

such as English, mathematics, and science, is more variable but satisfactory overall; teachers do not always have a full enough understanding of what targets to set from initial assessments. The very few children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in language and communication skills, numeracy, physical development and personal, social and health education (PSHE). As pupils move through the school pupils' progress improves, particularly in communication skills and ICT. As a result, pupils in Key Stage 4 and students at Post-16 make good progress towards their accredited courses and in their personal development. Pupils also increase their confidence, independence and communication skills as they get older, so that they are well prepared for adult life. Most parents, and nearly all pupils, believe that progress is good. There are no significant differences between the progress of girls and boys.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development are good. Pupils behave well and enjoy being at school because of this. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and say that their school is good. Pupils are encouraged to stay safe in school and, as a result, they feel safe. They take care when moving around the school, and they look after one another in the playground. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well, for example by keeping fit and choosing healthy foods. They make a positive contribution to the community by taking care of the environment, through, for example, the Harlow recycling scheme and raising funds for charitable causes. Staff listen carefully to the views of members of the School Council. They make a positive contribution to the school community, for example in improving the school fencing in the playground. Older pupils and students develop good skills to prepare them for economic well-being, through strong community links and work experience programmes. Younger pupils develop their literacy, communication and independence skills, which also promotes their economic well-being. Attendance is improving and is now satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory. There are some examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching which keep pupils focused on learning and enable them to make rapid progress. Teachers make good use of communication aids and sensory equipment, such as switches, to ensure that pupils with the most complex learning needs make the same progress as other pupils. Support assistants provide effective support in most lessons, although occasionally they are too passive at the beginning of lessons. This is why these lessons are only satisfactory. Assessment systems are generally good and teachers take account of the information in pupils' individual education plans and the advice given by the school nurse and therapists in planning lessons. However, teachers do not always record precisely how well pupils are doing and their understanding of what targets to set to move learning forward is limited by insufficient knowledge of

the assessment system being used. Although teachers have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with different learning needs, sometimes learning intentions are not made clear enough in planning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and well planned to ensure that it is relevant to the wide variety of pupils' needs. There is a good focus on developing literacy and communication, numeracy, PSHE, and independence skills. The curriculum also includes sensory experiences, such as the use of new plasma screens to tell the story of Swimming with Dolphins, in the sensory room. As a result, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoy full access to learning. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are also suitably adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The work of outside agencies and the school nurse considerably enhance the curriculum. Pupils also benefit from a range of visits, and visitors such as Indian dancers. Strong links within the community through leisure and sporting facilities greatly enhance pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils have good opportunities to learn in mainstream schools and from links with colleges. A wide range of accredited courses are offered to pupils in which they do well. All pupils have full access to the curriculum through careful support, the use of switches and communication aids. The curriculum for pupils with autism focuses well on developing communication through the use of picture cues and real objects. Consequently, pupils improve their social skills and behaviour, learning to communicate more effectively.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well cared for and supported in school. Child protection procedures are fully in place and governors ensure that assessments of potential risks are carried out regularly to safeguard pupils. All pupils have well thought-out medical care plans and new ones have recently been developed to ensure good support for pupils' personal hygiene and feeding needs. Parents are fully involved in Annual Reviews and contribute to their children's targets. Pupils' IEPs are carefully linked to the views of other professionals and these are regularly reviewed. They are also effectively linked to the Annual Reviews so pupils are able to make progress in small steps. All staff, including therapists try hard to ensure that pupils grow and develop in a safe and supportive environment. As a result, pupils trust and show respect for others, including adults in the school. Older pupils and students receive good guidance about their course and career choices, especially through close links with the Connexions service. A very small number of parents are concerned about some aspects of medical care, such as the administration of medicines. These views are not supported by the vast majority of parents or by this inspection.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher uses self-evaluation appropriately and has a good idea of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. More involvement of the whole staff and consultation with parents could improve this further. Nearly all parents are very positive about the school. The school takes parents' and pupils' views seriously. After the previous inspection a very small number of parents had concerns, which this inspection judged to be unfounded. The headteacher has done his best to address these concerns. The school has resolved the key issues from its previous inspection by responding well to this in the local education authority (LEA) review. The headteacher has developed good relationships with outside professionals and is well supported by his senior managers in moving the school forward. Governance is satisfactory. Established governors have a good knowledge of the school and, as a result of the LEA review, they have ensured that their legal obligations are now met. The governing body has just been re-constituted and so new governors have yet to fulfil their roles. The leadership of subjects is satisfactory. Subject co-ordinators have carried out an audit of main strengths and areas for development in their subjects and recently produced good development plans; these are incorporated in the school's priorities for development. However, co-ordinators have not yet fully developed their monitoring roles. Accordingly, teaching and pupils' achievements are satisfactory rather than good. All staff, are suitably qualified and experienced, working closely together to meet the individual needs of pupils. This is evident in the effective way pupils with autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties are supported and achieve their targets. The school also makes good use of its resources, and its good accommodation.

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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>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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>	3	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	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I recently came to your school. This letter is to tell you what I think about your school. I think your school is providing a satisfactory education for you. Your teachers, teaching assistants and therapists help you to make satisfactory progress. They give you lots of support and help you to communicate with others. They care about you so well that you always have someone to go to if you are upset. Staff make sure you are safe in the playground and around the school. I was also pleased with the way older pupils help you to enjoy your playtime. You behave well, you care about each other and you are kind to visitors. You have a good School Council which helps you to make decisions about your school. You tell the teachers what you like about school and how to make it even better. You enjoy learning because the staff are kind to you. Your headteacher runs your school satisfactorily, and he works closely with your teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and parents to make it even better. I have asked your teachers to give you better targets and to tell your parents how much progress you are making. I have also asked the staff in charge of subjects and your governors to keep checking how good teaching is. I have asked the school to keep checking that you are still well cared for and continue to have interesting things to do in your school. I would also like staff and parents to be involved more in making the school a better place. It was really nice to see you all working so hard. So keep it up.