



# Hillside School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114687  
**Local Authority** Brighton and Hove  
**Inspection number** 290000  
**Inspection date** 14 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steffi Penny HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Foredown Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Portslade
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-16		Brighton BN41 2FU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 416979
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	64	<b>Fax number</b>	01273 417512
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Steve-Harmer Strange
		<b>Headteacher</b>	R Wall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 September 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 4-16	<b>Inspection date</b> 14 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 290000
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school caters for pupils with a range of complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties, and over half with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A large proportion of pupils have additional medical needs and over a third of the pupils have sensory impairments. Most pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Pupils' skills on entry are very low, reflecting the range of learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a wide social and cultural mix of pupils but the majority of pupils are White British. The school serves the Brighton and Hove district and there are pupils who attend from other local authorities. A third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Post 16 provision was transferred to Downs View Link College at Varndean at Easter.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This outstanding school is consultative, responsive and always striving to improve. This consistent message about its underpinning values is sung in harmony by the community of staff, governors, pupils and their parents. Differing views are shared and celebrated, feeding into the inclusive ethos of this school. 'Every child has an influence on the school,' said one parent governor, and they were right. This is displayed well in school council meetings, where pupils' views regularly have an impact on school development and older pupils check to make sure the changes have taken place.

The vastly differing needs of pupils are met with exceptional attention to detail and creativity. The autistic provision, which was recently set up to meet local demand, is yet another example of the school's responsiveness and is led by well-informed staff, who have organised the provision with a careful balance of precise interventions and flexibility of approaches.

There is a seamless flow between group and individual activities across the whole school that is designed to ensure every pupil is included, yet their individual needs catered for with care and challenge. The same philosophy and achievement apply to the whole age range, including pupils in the Foundation Stage and those with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, medical needs and sensory impairments. All that is required is for the exemplary work performed by the majority of staff to be shared in order to raise all practice to the highest quality. The multi-disciplinary team working is excellent and targets challenge pupils to achieve their best in all aspects of their development. Where additional skills are required to meet the needs of pupils, the school efficiently uses its budget to ensure this happens, by jointly funding the school nurse and by contracting SENSE, one of the UK's leading deafblind organisations, to support the school with its programmes and strategies, which staff enthusiastically apply. The school represents excellent value for money.

Pupils' achievements are celebrated and careful records are kept of their progress, which is tracked rigorously over time. As a result it is crystal clear that pupils' achievements are excellent. The school recognises that more choice of courses which are accredited will benefit all pupils. The school explores the best ways to record progress, depending on the needs of pupils, and robust assessment is an integral part of school life, underpinned by a healthy professional dialogue about the best and most useful way to assess pupils with complex and very individual needs.

Opportunities for choice and meaningful activities to promote independent learning which give pupils practical experience are interwoven into the curriculum and a vast array of exciting activities and events is made available to pupils, ranging from fully inclusive residential journeys, to the Brighton Dance Festival. Pupils are genuinely pivotal to school improvement, and this permeates the wider strategic vision, where the committed and knowledgeable governing body have made it their business to know their school and represent its vision and aims faithfully and cohesively. The school's success in achieving its aims is due to its consistent and diligent commitment to its community and its responsive and creative leadership.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Share the outstanding professional expertise within the school community to ensure the highest standards of practice are achieved throughout the school.
- Make sure that all pupils can do courses which give them accredited certification.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well even though their levels of skills are well below what would be expected for their age. This is as a result of personalised and challenging targets which are evaluated and reviewed regularly. Pupils have the benefit of input from a highly effective multi-disciplinary team with a long history of adhering to the principles of supporting the whole child. This ensures that there is a healthy balance between mental and physical well-being targets and demonstrates that the school understands the important link between these elements.

High expectations are fully communicated through individual and subject targets and very detailed record keeping ensures that staff know the progress that pupils make and the reasons why. Staff are keenly aware of those pupils who have degenerative conditions. Their entitlement to challenging targets is adhered to within the context of what is realistic and supportive.

The high quality and quantity of work which pupils produce is exceptional and where pupils need their work to be documented through photographic evidence this is presented in a highly professional and accessible format so that progress and achievement are transparent and personalised.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance is good and is only hindered by pupils' illness and hospital appointments, although these are minimised by the school through the wide range of health clinics available on site. Pupils adopt good safe practices because adults help them, but more could be done to develop pupils' greater independence in this area. Where pupils are able, they make healthy choices for food and take part in a very wide range of physical activities. Pupils make an impressive contribution to their own and other local communities. They develop good workplace skills, but since the transfer of the sixth form pupils, these could be developed further.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Well-organised playtime sessions encourage pupils to mix with each other and to develop their social skills through hide and seek, and the use of bikes, go-carts, basketballs and swings, including adaptations for wheelchairs. Pupils of all ages and needs are represented on the school council. Pupils care about each other and the school takes what they say seriously. A good example of this is that in one class pupils made it known that they

did not like ice cream and would prefer cake. A pupil in another class and older year group was keen to ensure that they had their cake instead, and they did!

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding because the highly committed staff have a 'joined-up attitude', with a willingness to be self-reflective and enthusiastic about collaborative working. Learning is completely individualised and is extended well both in the classroom and beyond. All staff use signs and symbols consistently. Some staff have amazing and sustained teaching skills. These should be shared more regularly with other staff to raise the quality of all teaching to these exceedingly high levels of expertise. One parent summed up the views of parents and the inspectors when they said, 'the staff are excellent, enthusiastic and listen to any concerns. They are very helpful and also give their time for educational visits so the children can experience performing and performances as well as sports and residential visits'.

The Transactive Project, undertaken through the Connexions service, results in some stunning portfolios of work by pupils. Through the enthusiasm of the Intensive Personal Adviser and the involvement of pupils in the school with the service, Brighton and Hove Connexions have adapted some of their forms to include signs and symbols to make them easier to understand.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum provides an outstanding range of activities and experiences for the pupils. There is a commitment to ensure full entitlement to all subjects in the National Curriculum yet it is modified and designed to be meaningful, reflecting the wide range of pupils' needs. Where possible, pupils regularly take part in a wide range of activities, including curling, swimming and horse riding. The school has purchased with an independent school some alpacas through a partnership initiative. The pupils visit the alpacas and learn how to tend and care for them. Pupils learn French and particularly enjoy the French Café that they create as part of their work.

Since the last inspection, specific courses have been written and accredited for the Assessment and Qualification Alliance Unit Award Schemes. The school has identified that more choice in accredited courses is required.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is because the pupils and their families receive co-ordinated, high quality and family-centred support. Excellent interactive relationships with other professionals and agencies such as therapists and

health and social care workers are coordinated through the school and are based on assessed needs. Individual termly targets are used and achievements against learning objectives are tracked effectively. Very good communication ensures that children and their families are active partners in the assessment process. This helps to ensure families' expectations are managed appropriately and any unmet needs are recorded and monitored systematically to inform future service planning. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust.

Pupils are supported effectively for the next stage in their learning. Much work was done by the school to support pupils moving to the new link college provision. However, if the link college continues to have mixed classes of pupil need, then the school will need to reconsider how to prepare the pupils and parents for this change.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership of the senior management team and the governing body is outstanding. A distinct feature of the school is its ability to be responsive and quickly make changes to meet the needs of its pupils. It demonstrates flexibility and its consultation processes are brilliant. It takes on board the views of its community and weaves them into school improvement. Parents appreciate this and describe it as a 'unique' and 'truly special' school. Many parents expressed deep concern at the transfer of sixth form pupils from the school by the local authority and that the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are now taught in mixed groups with limited hoist access.

The school provides a highly effective outreach service to support mainstream schools and inclusion. The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection and its capacity to improve further is excellent.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. 'They work so hard to help our child achieve his potential, whatever that might be' is just one of the effusive quotes reflecting parents' strong support for the school. The pupil charter is at the heart of the school's ethos and sets the scene for an environment which exudes respect for dignity and difference and promotes positive working relationships between the whole community, where being a critical friend is a welcome challenge. Here each person's role has equal value and contributes to the whole. The school is slightly modest in its self-evaluation but this is because it shuns complacency. Such high expectations are communicated to pupils, who give their utmost to achieve their very best and are supported to do so.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We very much enjoyed seeing you in lessons, looking at your work and talking with you. A big thank you to those of you who met with us and told us what makes your school outstanding.

This is what we think your school does best.

- You make excellent progress, work hard and behave well.
- Teaching is excellent.
- Your headteacher and team run the school extremely well and are good at making improvements so it is easier for you to learn.
- Staff take very good care of you and some of you learn to do many things on your own.
- Staff are good at working with your parents and other people to solve problems.

This is what we have asked the school to do now.

- Improve teaching even further by making sure that staff regularly share the excellent work that is already seen in most classes with each other.
- Make sure that all pupils can do courses which give them accredited certificates when they achieve their goals.