

The Lindfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114693
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	290002
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Farrell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Belk
Headteacher	Jane Oatey
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2007
School address	Lindfield Road Hampden Park Eastbourne BN22 0BQ
Telephone number	01323 502988
Fax number	01323 500433

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Lindfield Community Special School has recently been completely rebuilt on the same site so that the school now enjoys very good subject facilities in spacious, purpose-built accommodation. Previously the school provided education for students most of whom had moderate learning difficulties. It now provides for a greater number of students most of whom have autism, communication and associated learning difficulties. There is one student for whom English is an additional language, five who are looked after by the local authority, and five from ethnic minority backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the school varies widely. The school is a member of a local federation of schools and colleges.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Lindfield School is a good school with particular strengths in encouraging pupils' personal development, well-being and self-esteem. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their school, and this can be seen in their excellent behaviour and above-average attendance. Pupils' confidence in conversation and their pride in the school are nurtured because the school has created a real sense of a community in which pupils can thrive. Good personal development is achieved through the school's good ethos and support systems, including tutor groups. Excellent links with other schools and colleges provide opportunities for pupils to learn well in these settings.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative, saying, for example, 'We don't believe we could do any better than at Lindfield School – we can't praise them enough for the job they do.' A pupil who is about to leave typically said, 'The school has done a lot for me – really a lot'.

Pupils' learning difficulties mean that standards are generally well below national expectations but a few are reaching age-typical standards in some subjects, for example, mathematics and science. However, the progress pupils make is good and they achieve well throughout their time at school, gaining skills and knowledge by the time they leave that enables them to successfully and confidently transfer to college or work. The good subject-based curriculum and the autism facility provide a wide range of good educational experiences, including work-related courses and a suitable range of accreditation opportunities, including Youth Award Scheme and Entry Level. Teaching and learning are good and teachers, teaching assistants and other staff work closely together to ensure the good progress of pupils in a calm and happy atmosphere. Opportunities to support learning through the effective use of visual and other cues are sometimes missed and the evaluation and marking of pupils' work does not consistently show them what they have to do to improve.

The good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff have successfully led the school through a period of major change as the school has been entirely rebuilt in phases while still occupied and the profile of pupils attending the school has changed. They have placed emphasis on recruiting and keeping the right staff to both develop subject specialisms and build the strong and supportive ethos which has led to the strong personal development for pupils. Excellent computer-based systems help the school monitor and maintain good progress and good teaching and learning. Self-evaluation is good and governors provide good support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make even faster progress by more consistency in the use of visual and other cues.
- Ensure the evaluation of work and marking consistently tells pupils what they must do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards of attainment of pupils are well below national expectations, although a few reach age-expected standards in some subjects such as mathematics and science. All pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout their schooling, and they achieve very well in art

and design. Older pupils aged 14 to 16 successfully achieve well in a good range of accredited courses which has been appropriately extended as the population of pupils has changed over recent years. Groups of pupils, such as those in local authority care, all make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good personal development and well-being is evident in pupils' great enjoyment of school life and their pride in the school and their achievements. Their spiritual and cultural development is good, with particularly strong development in self-esteem. Moral and social development is excellent and pupils are confident in conversation, are polite and have a clear moral sense, being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Lunchtimes and breaks are relaxed and sociable times when pupils chat and build friendships. They have a strong sense of the school as a community and their contribution to the wider community is excellent, with pupils playing a full part in outside activities such as arts festivals and music concerts. Attendance is good and pupils feel safe and know to whom they should go if they have worries. Because the school encourages healthy lifestyles well, pupils are aware of the advantages of healthy eating. However, they do not always behave in line with this awareness. Good progress in core subjects and good opportunities for work-related courses and work experience lead to the development of good economic skills that prepare pupils well for work or college.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although, overall, teaching and learning are good, the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Activities are interesting, teacher expectations and pupil aspirations are high, and teachers and teaching assistants, who make a valuable contribution, work closely together. Lesson planning and learning objectives are clear and this leads to well-structured lessons which, coupled with excellent relationships and pupil behaviour, produce good progress. A particular strength is the way genuine warm praise and high expectations are used to nurture and build pupils' self-esteem. For example, in a lesson on computer animation, the teacher set the scene excellently by stating at the beginning, 'By the end of this project, you will all have produced something you will be proud of.' Opportunities are missed to underpin learning through more consistent use of visual and other supports. For example, in a geography lesson, although the interactive whiteboard was well used to provide suitable images, individual pupils' understanding of what they were reading was not sufficiently supplemented by symbols or other visual aids. Verbal explanations are well employed to help pupils' progress. However, where marking is used, it does not always make it as clear as it should what the pupil has to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good and improving subject-based curriculum provides a good range of experiences that support pupils' learning well, including the contributions of subject specialist teachers, teaching assistants and speech and language therapists. It is well matched to pupils' needs. The curriculum is supported by very good facilities in dedicated subject rooms. It is effectively enhanced by the school's increasing breadth of accreditation which year on year has been developed further

and includes Entry Level and some General Certificates in Secondary Education. The wide range of links with others, including other schools and colleges supported through federation arrangements, provide very good opportunities, including work preparation courses and work experience. Opportunities to develop and apply 'thinking skills' across the curriculum are not sufficiently embedded.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on building and raising pupil's self-esteem and is very successful in this, as indicated, for example, in the insightful summaries of their achievements made by pupils in Year 11. Pupils achieve well, feel safe and progress well personally because academic and personal progress is monitored carefully and appropriate action taken if pupils are falling behind. The credit sticker reward system is fairly and effectively administered, further encouraging effort. Procedures for child protection and for health and safety are robust. Attendance, which is good, is monitored through very good systems. The school makes effective use of a school counsellor as well as tutor groups to support progress and build confidence. While pupils meet challenging targets, the school does not always sufficiently emphasise individual targets, for example, in lessons and marking, so that pupils are not as fully aware of these as they could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In a period of considerable change, the headteacher and senior staff have set a clear direction and successfully led the school so that it has adapted and developed well. The hard work and commitment of the staff have led to an ethos in which pupils thrive and there has been a strong and very successful drive to improve links with other schools, colleges and services, to the benefit of pupils. Very rare instances of discrimination are tackled vigorously in the context of a happy and secure ethos where all pupils have the opportunity to succeed. The school's administrative staff make a good contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

Performance is monitored and evaluated well using an excellent computer-based system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. The school improvement plan, while it is comprehensive and involves subject specialist development plans, is too detailed and sometimes focuses on processes rather than outcomes. This reduces its impact.

Governors support the school well and governors carry out their special responsibilities well, for example, in the transition arrangements for pupils at age 16. Having maintained standards and provision in challenging and changing circumstances, and having a clear sense of direction for the future, the school is well placed to make further improvements and has a good capacity and determination to do so.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Lindfield School, Hampden Park, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 0BQ

Thank you for your help and friendliness when Mary and I inspected your school recently. It was a delight to meet you all and to see how proud you are of your school.

We found many good things about your school. You make good progress. Your behaviour is excellent and you are polite and confident. Teaching is good and your teachers and others make your lessons interesting and plan them with care. The curriculum is good and you have a wide range of activities and opportunities to take examinations. The building is lovely and you have very good facilities. The school is well led and Ms Oatey and the senior staff have guided the school well through many changes in the past few years.

There are a few things the school can do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- Make sure that in lessons you have pictures, symbols and other aids that will help make sure you understand the work well.
- Make sure when marking your work they make it very clear what you have to do to improve.

Thank you again and every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Lead inspector