



Stephen Hawking School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131023
Local Authority Tower Hamlets
Inspection number 293691
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Brunton Place
School category	Community		London
Age range of pupils	2–11		E14 7LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7423 9848
Number on roll (school)	71	Fax number	020 7423 9878
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pamela Mason
		Headteacher	Mr Matthew Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this special school have profound and multiple learning difficulties or multi-sensory impairment; a small number have severe learning difficulties. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils with chronic medical conditions and a similar reduction in the number with severe learning difficulties. The school draws its pupils from an area of high social deprivation and the vast majority of its pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The school has gained the Artsmark Silver Award and the Basic Skills Mark and has Investor in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school and some features of its work are outstanding. It is highly appreciated by parents, who particularly value 'the way the school promotes and encourages activities for parents and their children together in the classroom', and its sensitivity to children's needs through 'positively encouraging the activities they enjoy'.

The school provides an outstanding quality of care, guidance and support for its pupils, working very closely with a wide range of therapists and other agencies. This, together with extreme sensitivity to every child, contributes to pupils' outstanding personal development. Links between home and school are exemplary and the curriculum is enriched by exceptional links with the community and with the corporate world of the City and nearby Canary Wharf.

Standards are necessarily well below those found in schools nationally as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities, but achievement is good as a result of good teaching. The Foundation Stage provides well for children's needs and ensures that children make good progress. Joint work between teachers and therapists has led to the production of outstanding targets for individual pupils and the school's facilities are used very well to meet the needs of all the pupils. Four teachers have recently completed training in working with pupils with multi-sensory impairment, which has led to an increase in the level of expertise within the school. There are some examples of outstanding interaction between staff and individual pupils, whereby teachers provide exactly the right level of stimulation to elicit maximum response. Not all staff give pupils enough time to respond, however, or pay enough attention to the effect activities are having on pupils. When this happens, opportunities are missed to build on the attention and interest of individual pupils in moving their learning forward.

The school is led and managed well. It has a very stable staff, provides exceptionally good opportunities for them to undertake training and readily embraces local, national and international initiatives. Teamwork amongst staff at all levels is a particular feature of the school and there is a strong shared commitment to make the school as good as possible. Governance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Governors are involved effectively in reviewing progress against planned developments and provide a good level of challenge as well as support to the school. At all levels, a great deal of energy goes into evaluating the school's effectiveness, with an emphasis on developing systems and introducing new initiatives that may well be of benefit to the pupils. However, managers pay insufficient attention to checking the impact of provision on pupils' achievement and development. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and provides good value for money. It is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff give individual pupils time to respond and then use what this reveals, alongside their existing knowledge about each pupil, to determine what to do next.

- Refine existing self-evaluation systems to ensure that managers and governors measure more precisely the impact provision has on pupils' achievement and development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are necessarily low, but achievement is good. Pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and towards those that have been identified for them in each subject area. They make good progress in developing their communication skills by making eye contact, vocalising, signing, using switches or indicating pictures and objects that symbolise particular ideas or activities. Information and communication technology contributes well to their learning in a range of subjects. They make good progress in their creative development, taking an active part for instance in producing dyed fabrics, prints and banners. They make particularly good progress in their physical development, through physical education, swimming and hydrotherapy, sporting activities and as a result of their individual physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions. Occasionally, pupils do not make as much progress as they could when adults do not give them enough time to respond, and the achievement of a small minority of pupils is adversely affected by their irregular attendance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Parents say that their children love coming to school and it is clear that pupils gain considerable enjoyment from the activities provided. Behaviour is good and pupils have very trusting relationships with the adults who work with them. They usually co-operate very well with the staff and at times respond tenderly to one another. Attendance is satisfactory: most pupils attend regularly but a small minority miss school through trips abroad or as a result of their medical conditions. The school's excellent attention to the personal and physical needs of pupils ensures that they are kept as healthy and safe as possible. Involvement in the community, for instance through visiting a corporate bank or taking part in local events such as Black History Month or a police art competition, greatly extends pupils' sense of identity and understanding of their place in society. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The cultural diversity of the school's intake and of the local community is actively celebrated and pupils interact harmoniously with one another. They learn to express their preferences and where appropriate, older pupils take responsibility, for instance, in helping with assembly. Pupils develop as much mobility as possible and the progress they make in acquiring basic skills and independence stand them in good stead for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Lessons are lively and staff use a good wide range of stimuli, including objects and pictures, that appeal to pupils' senses, promote their communication and contribute to their enjoyment of learning. As a result, pupils engage and focus well on activities. Thorough records are kept of each pupil's progress and teaching is informed by well-defined individual education plan targets and by exceptionally precise individual targets within each subject. Teamwork is consistently strong and in the best teaching, each member of the class team works with an individual pupil, matching materials and props, instructions and questions to the exact next step in that pupil's learning. In these lessons and also, less frequently, when pupils come together as a whole class, staff pay very careful attention to the response of each pupil, using switches and signing where necessary, to decide how to proceed. This is not always the case, however, and at times pupils are swept along in adult-generated activities without sufficient time or attention being given to how they are responding. Outstanding opportunities are provided for parents to take part in workshops and training that develops their skills and understanding to enable them to contribute to their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. High expectations are evident in the way the school successfully adapts the National Curriculum to the needs of individual pupils and wherever possible, pupils are given opportunities to spend some of their time working alongside children from mainstream schools. Links with the community and with business make a major contribution to the exciting range of opportunities provided and do much to expand pupils' horizons. The establishment of the Stephen Hawking Trust, a charity that runs alongside the school through its business links, significantly extends what is provided for pupils and their families. Large banking institutions have, for instance, funded the summer school and the Christmas party and made available to pupils experiences they would never otherwise have. Volunteers from business regularly work in the school and provide support, for example, on educational visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils benefit a great deal from the high level of adult support provided and the extremely caring attitude and sensitivity of the staff. An exceptional level of care is provided for pupils with medical conditions and the extreme attention to detail is evident, for instance, in the way the school provides meals in a range of textures from liquid to puree to solids according to the feeding needs of each pupil. The school has a large team of therapists on site and the

practice of holding clinics, such as that of the paediatrician, on the school premises contributes to the work the school is doing in its attempts to improve the rate of attendance. The school provides training for mainstream staff whenever children move on to primary school and liaises closely with hospital schools where pupils have conditions that require hospitalisation. Systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils are very thorough, and the school is generously staffed to ensure that pupils receive a very high level of adult support and supervision. Outstanding partnership with parents, including extensive support to families as well as their children, contributes a great deal to pupils' achievement and well-being. The school has thorough systems in place for assessing and recording pupils' progress and uses this to track carefully the achievement of groups and individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The newly appointed headteacher, who was previously deputy head within the school, and other senior managers combine a clear vision with detailed knowledge of the school's work. The school is a dynamic establishment, where expectations are high and there is a strong commitment to the full inclusion of every pupil. Effective systems are in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for checking other aspects of teachers' work. Managers make good use of data to identify how well the school is performing, and they are outward looking in embracing new initiatives that might be of benefit to the pupils. The involvement of all staff in discussions, membership of working groups and review of the school's performance is a particular strength. As a result, staff work as a coherent and committed team with a shared sense of purpose. The leadership of home-school links, of the curriculum and assessment and of care, is outstanding. A system for self-evaluation has been adopted that underpins the school's ongoing development, but managers and governors do not use this to focus sufficiently on the impact provision has on pupils' achievement and personal growth. The great deal of effort that goes into recording information and identifying priorities for development is, therefore, not as effective as it should be.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

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	1
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

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and am writing now to let you know what I found out about it.

This is a good school and it does some things really well. I can see why your parents are so pleased with the school. The way that it works with them, supporting them as well as you and showing them how to help you at home, is fantastic. The wonderful partnership the school has with the community and with businesses is another very important part of its work, because this increases the experiences the school is able to provide for you.

The school provides outstanding care and support for you, and the teachers and teaching assistants are really sensitive to you. The very close work between teachers, therapists and other people who help you means that the school thinks very carefully about how best to meet all of your needs. You are making extremely good progress in gaining confidence, in learning to relate to other people and achieving as much movement as possible. You make good progress in learning new things and I was pleased to see how much you enjoy school. Sometimes, adults pay very careful attention to how you are responding to what they are showing you or doing with you and that is when you learn the most. I have asked the school to make sure that the staff always give you enough time to respond before they move on and do something else.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and all the staff work very closely together and they are always thinking about ways of making the school better for you. I have asked them to make sure that in whatever they do, they check very carefully whether it is really improving things for you.

Yours sincerely

M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector