

# Stormont House School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100307
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hackney
<b>Inspection number</b>	307351
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Melvyn Blackband

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bernard Hawes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Kevin McDonnell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2005
<b>School address</b>	Downs Park Road London E5 8NP
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8985 4245
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8985 6886

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	307351

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school provides education for students with a wide range of learning difficulties, including those with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and a large minority of students with complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The vast majority of pupils have speech and language communication needs, including a fifth with autistic spectrum conditions, while a small minority have visual impairment. Many students come from disadvantaged home backgrounds and over half of them qualify for free school meals. Although the majority of pupils are drawn from the local area, smaller numbers are referred to the school from eight other local authorities, reflecting the complexity of needs provided for at the school. Two thirds of the students are from minority ethnic groups but no students are at the earliest stages of learning English.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Stormont House provides an outstanding education for its students. It has continued to improve on its performance since the previous inspection when it was also judged to be outstanding. The students' attainment remains below that expected in mainstream schools but all the students do well in their studies and many make outstanding progress. The quality of teaching is excellent. The students enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Lessons are well planned and characterised by the high quality of support students receive from their teachers and the well-trained assistants. The tracking of students' progress is very effective. This enables subject leaders to identify strengths in teaching and intervene quickly when any slight slowdown is detected in the students' performance. Teachers make very clear assessments of the small steps in students' progress. Each department, however, uses different methods to make the assessments and so, for instance, procedures in English are unrelated to those in mathematics. This occasionally means students' targets on their individual learning plans are not as clear as they could be.

The curriculum is outstandingly effective because teachers tailor activities to students' needs and abilities. As a result, the students tackle challenging tasks to which they respond with enthusiasm. The provision to teach the older students about the world of work and further training is a strength of the school and resulted last year, for example, in all the leavers going on to further education, employment or training.

The students thrive within the caring ethos of the school. All of them make excellent progress in their personal development. This helps those with behavioural and emotional problems overcome many of the barriers to their learning. It underpins their excellent attitudes to learning and helps them to achieve their full potential. Other students make huge gains in their confidence and willingness to attempt challenging learning activities. The school manages the students' behaviour in an exemplary way. The behaviour of many students becomes outstanding as they move through the school and gain the understanding necessary to control their own conduct. For a large minority of students this represents a significant improvement from when they first join the school. They feel well supported and become confident learners. Teachers place a strong emphasis on personal, health and social education (PHSE) and this encourages the students to respect and value themselves and others. They learn to remain healthy and to keep themselves safe. The students value the school and this is evident through the excellent relationships they have with staff and their good and improving attendance. Parents report that their children are very happy at school. They feel confident that the students enjoy their lessons and that the school has high expectations of their achievements. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work. One parent commented, 'I can't believe how well he has settled in. He always comes home saying he's had a great day.'

The headteacher's outstanding leadership and management have driven the continuing improvement. A very competent deputy and an extended leadership team, which has grown in confidence and expertise, have supported the headteacher. Together they have been consistently effective in leading staff to improve students' attitudes to learning and, consequently, their achievements. The school evaluates its work extremely well. It seeks and acts on the views of all connected with the school, not least the students themselves. The governing body is supportive and monitors aspects of the school's work extremely robustly. Because of the school's rigorous self-evaluation and the drive and determination of the governors and staff consistently

to provide an even better service to its students, there is an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school therefore provides excellent value for money.

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

- Ensure that there is consistent recording of the small steps in students' learning, to enable them at all times to work towards sharply defined learning targets.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The students' attainment, on entry to the school, is generally well below average. Most students, however, make substantial and continual improvement, especially in Years 10 and 11 where the pace of progress accelerates. This enables virtually all the students to reach their potential in a range of GCSE and entry-level courses and to achieve a level of qualifications which is only just below that expected in mainstream schools. All the students make exceptional progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The quality of this progress is such that for several years the students' performance has been very near the top of national comparative figures for all schools. There is no evidence of any underachievement by any group of students. They make excellent progress in meeting challenging learning targets and they start to take a real pride in their own progress as they move through the school. This has a crucial impact on their academic success.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The students' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's exceptional management of behaviour and the very strong emphasis on moral and social values. The school's records show how quickly students respond to its clear rules and how as a result their attitudes to learning improve and their rates of achievement accelerate. Students feel safe and confident and know what is expected of them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students, for instance, often support and help to calm others who are experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties. The students gradually develop a strong awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities to take part in physical activity during the day and at lunchtimes. Older students make very good gains in acquiring life skills through the excellent careers provision and work experience. The attendance of most students is good because they enjoy school so much. Students were emphatic that they felt free from bullying or unpleasantness and that they really looked forward to coming to school. The many parents who returned questionnaires praised the school for its positive impact on their children's lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teachers know their students very well and this enables them to plan interesting, well-paced lessons. Lessons proceed with clear objectives and students receive instant feedback on their performance. There are very good relationships between classroom teams and between staff and students. The small groups enable students to receive a high level of individual tuition from teachers and classroom assistants. They help the students to enjoy their lessons and try

their best. Teachers mark and assess students' work very effectively. As a result, they are able to plan challenging activities for each student, so enabling them to make good and often outstanding progress. However, the absence of a consistent method, across the whole school, of recording the students' progress occasionally results in their targets being less focused than they could be. Students understand and respond to clear routines. When a student's behaviour becomes unacceptable it is dealt with calmly and with understanding and support for the student involved.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The school's specialist teachers make sure that activities are very well matched to the students' learning needs, interests and abilities. Students with autism are supported by means of appropriate visual clues and the higher-ability students with moderate learning difficulties are stretched by challenging and interesting activities. Students respond by maintaining a high level of attention. Programmes in PHSE underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on the students' achievement in personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. Students learn to respect all members of the school and people of different cultures in the wider community. There are very good programmes of trips and visits, including one to France, which teach the students effectively that new things can be learned in many different situations. There is excellent provision for teaching basic skills, which, together with the outstanding work-based learning opportunities, adds substantially to the students' social skills and self-confidence and enriches their preparation for adult life.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides a high standard of safeguarding and care for all of its students. It maintains excellent links with outside support agencies. Students have many opportunities to talk informally to staff members and they greatly appreciate their supportive relationships with trusted adults. The students have a good understanding of their academic and behavioural targets. As a result, they quickly become aware of how to improve their performance. Parents report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their child's education. Students receive very good advice from careers specialists as they are about to leave school and there are strong links with local colleges. Because of this support, most students leave school with positive plans to access further education, employment or training.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Excellent leadership and management have enabled the school to maintain consistent improvement on the outstanding provision found at the previous inspection. One of the school's many strengths lies in the rigorous and effective way managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the students' academic and personal achievements and the provision made for them. For example, the progress which the students make is closely tracked and they are challenged, consistently and effectively, to raise the level of their achievement. These achievements could be even better if records of the students' progress were to be recorded in exactly the same format throughout the school. There are very effective procedures to measure

and improve staff performance. Communication within the school is excellent. Staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. The high level of their professional training has been planned well to focus on the needs of the students. This makes a significant contribution to sustaining students' outstanding achievement. Governors provide exemplary support to the school; they work closely with individual staff and they rigorously monitor the school's strengths and areas for development. The communication between home and school is very well organised and parents are actively encouraged to be involved with their child's education.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

**Overall effectiveness**

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

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?</b>	1
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

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Stormont House School, London, E5 8NP

Not long ago I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classrooms, at lunchtime and in a meeting. Thank you and well done.

I was only with you for two days but that was long enough for me to realise that Stormont House is an outstanding school. I could see that you all enjoy school very much. There are many very good things about the school.

- You work hard and make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development. Your behaviour is very good and shows what excellent progress you have made since you came to the school.
- Your teachers and other adults at the school look after and support you very well.
- You have an excellent range of activities including those that help you become independent and prepare you for leaving school and starting adult life.
- You look after each other very well.
- Your headteacher runs the school extremely well. Everyone else, including your parents, gives him good support.

I think the school could improve even further if the staff were to put their heads together to agree a way for them all to write in the same way about all the improvements you are making in your work; that way they could help you to do even better.

You can help of course by continuing to work as hard as you do now!

Please thank your parents for all the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector