

Springhallow School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101970
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	307862
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Thea Chittenden
Headteacher	Mr Andy Balmer
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Compton Close Cavendish Avenue Ealing London W13 0JG
Telephone number	020 8998 2700
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Age group	4-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Springhallow provides for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) including Aspergers syndrome. Only 6% of the pupils are girls, reflecting the greater incidence of ASD in boys. All pupils have additional difficulties, particularly in communication and social skills, which affect their learning. Around 60% of pupils have significant learning difficulties, ranging from severe (SLD) to moderate (MLD), and one quarter of these have very challenging behaviour. One primary age and one secondary age 'Gold' class has been created to meet the needs of pupils with the most complex difficulties. The complexity of pupils' needs on entry is increasing annually. Pupils are admitted from the borough of Ealing, and a number of neighbouring local authorities. They have varied social and economic backgrounds, which reflect the diverse ethnic and faith populations of London. One third of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very small number are at an early stage of learning English. There are three looked after children. The school provides an outreach support service to other Ealing schools. It has received a number of awards including: the Autism Accreditation Award (three times); Basic Skills Quality Mark for the primary and secondary curricula; the BECTA national ICT Mark; Healthy Schools Status; Sportsmark; Activemark and Silver Artsmark (twice). The school is part of a Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative and there are plans to rebuild it on the current site in four years time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Springhallow is a good school. It has maintained its effectiveness since the last inspection when it was also judged to be good. Issues identified for improvement have been effectively addressed. However, the last three years have not been easy, and the past year has been particularly challenging for Springhallow because of a number of unforeseen staff absences. Good leadership, management and governance, with some outstanding practice, has steered the school successfully during this time. The governing body and new headteacher have a very clear, well-communicated vision for the school. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007. He recognised that a number of systems and practices required updating and developing to improve the school. He made outstanding plans to do so. However, unforeseen staffing difficulties reduced the senior leadership team from five members to two, and affected the composition of class staff. The school's energy was put into preserving the quality of provision for the pupils. This was largely successful but the pace of planned development slowed. In particular, delays have occurred in the implementation of plans to: distribute leadership responsibilities through the school to improve school self-evaluation and quality monitoring; to implement new systems for the assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress; and to implement new systems for curriculum planning and target setting. The school's staffing difficulties are now resolving, and should be fully resolved in September. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils achieve well at Springhallow. All pupils make good academic progress and a number make outstanding progress. Standards vary considerably according to the severity of pupils' learning difficulties. The majority attain standards that are very low but a significant number attain levels that are just below average. A small number attain the levels expected for their age, for example, achieving a number of GCSEs. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The school helps them take part in and make a good contribution to the community. As they learn to communicate more effectively, to understand and become less fearful of the world around them, the effects of their ASD reduce. One pupil said, 'This school's been extraordinarily good with me. I used to have vigorous behaviour difficulties...' He is moving to the sixth form of a local mainstream school at the end of this term.

Pupils' attendance is excellent and well above the national average. They enjoy school and their behaviour is good. The school is free from bullying and racist incidents and pupils are patient and considerate towards one another. The great majority of parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school. One parent wrote, 'Springhallow is a blessing to my son and family...they see how a child with autism impacts on each individual in a family and home life.' Another said, 'My son is now a confident, happy child who is learning well...transformed by the expert teaching, care and guidance of Springhallow staff.'

Pupils' success is the result of the long-standing good quality provision. The quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, and support, care and guidance are all good. Some aspects are outstanding, but a small amount is showing the effect of the lack of support and monitoring resulting from the depleted leadership team. The curriculum is very well planned to help the higher attaining pupils learn and build up their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically. Suitable adaptations are made to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, and those in the Gold and early years classes. The school has rightly identified the need for whole-scale curriculum review and staff training. These are aimed at meeting the needs of the

changing pupil population and improving assessment and tracking so the staff can monitor pupils' progress more closely.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The early years provision was identified as a strength in the last inspection. The class is not managed separately from the rest of the school and the long-established good practice has largely continued. However, staffing difficulties have resulted in some fall-off in the quality of teaching and the implementation of the curriculum in the past year. The effectiveness of provision is now adequate, nevertheless, pupils' good progress has been maintained. This is due to the strength of provision in improving their personal development, behaviour and communication, which are key tools for further learning. Strong support from teaching assistants and therapists is another factor.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the information gained from the new assessment and progress tracking system to inform planning for individuals' progress, target setting and school improvement.
- Review the curriculum and develop staff skills so the school is prepared for the increasing number of pupils with more significant learning difficulties.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment on entry varies from very low to average, but they all make at least good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Some pupils make outstanding progress, once they have overcome some of the effects of their autism. All pupils make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they develop the means of structuring their world and communicating effectively. The few pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress because of the school's expertise in promoting communication. Pupils are well prepared for further education and adult life. A few individuals achieve broadly average grades in the national tests for pupils aged 7, 11 and 14, and they gain a wide range of accreditation at the end of Year 11, including a number of GCSEs for higher attainers. The achievement of lower attaining pupils is good and is clearly demonstrated in written records, reports and accreditation. All pupils make good progress towards the targets on individual education plans (IEPs) which address their learning styles and autism-related needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils who enter the school as distressed, unhappy individuals are transformed into happy, sociable, well-motivated young people who are proud of their achievements. They learn to take part in, and give back to, the school and wider communities. Higher attaining pupils show an often poignant understanding of their own and others' difficulties. Pupils are supported to understand and abide by the school and society's moral codes. They accept responsibility, and express views openly. Pupils are considerate towards one another, for example, waiting for each another to answer in class, recognising that some find this more difficult than others. Pupils understand, value and enjoy each others' heritages and celebrations, and enjoy using cultural expression

in drama, art and music. Most pupils understand about healthy lifestyles. They take part in various physical activities, eat healthily and become willing to try a wider range of foods. Older, higher attaining pupils respond very responsibly to sexual health education. Pupils feel safe, happy and comfortable in contrast to previous school experiences. Challenging behaviours show clear improvement over time and pupils respond very well to the school's strategies. Their attitudes to learning are usually very good, and often excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Some teaching is excellent, and there are outstanding elements to many lessons. Lessons are generally planned well, however, the format of planning is not standardised and the quality and detail varies. Most teachers have very good knowledge about autism, use resources well, and make good use of very effective teaching assistants. Staff challenge pupils with motivational tasks, provide good strategies for learning, take good account of their IEP targets and record progress carefully. Behaviour is very well managed so that the atmosphere in all classes is warm, calm and happy. A small amount of teaching is less effective. This is usually related to the clarity of communication with lower attaining pupils and an insufficient focus on what they are expected to learn. Parents and carers are pleased with their children's progress and are generally involved well in their learning through various means including direct contact, home-school books and homework.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is very well established and supports good teaching and learning. It has won a number of awards which endorse its quality. The curriculum for 7-14 year olds follows a subject-based mainstream model that is particularly appropriate for higher attaining pupils. It is suitably adapted for the Gold classes to provide a topic-based approach that better suits their needs. The curriculum for the early years class is suitable but is not always implemented as planned. The curriculum for 14-16 year olds is very good. Outstanding partnership with a local secondary school supports pupils' inclusion and achievement. All pupils taking GCSEs study them there, while Springhallow provides a range of other accredited courses. Progression routes after Springhallow are well-established, with all students moving on to further education, including mainstream sixth form for some. Curriculum enrichment is good, with many opportunities such as whole school productions and work with artists in residence to enhance pupils' learning and personal development. Evidence of strong provision in the creative arts such as mosaics, sculpture, artwork and various displays of drama activities abound in the school. The senior managers are aware that the curriculum should be reviewed to make the provision for younger and lower attaining pupils its main core, while retaining the flexibility to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils is good. The school gives outstanding support for individuals' well-being, and works successfully to keep them safe and healthy. Staff are alert to the individual needs of the pupils who may not be able to communicate them as such. The

relevant policies and practices are in place to safeguard pupils properly. Occasional erratic attendance is followed up immediately. Partnerships with parents is strong, supported by the family link worker who works with individual families as needed, and organises various activities, groups and information-giving sessions. Partnership with local schools is very good and pupils in all settings benefit from social and academic inclusion and Springhallow's outreach work. The school has good partnerships with other professional agencies and good support and guidance is given by the school-based therapists. The new format of IEPs supports improvement in pupils' personal and autism-related needs very effectively. The current assessment and progress-tracking system allows good academic guidance for the higher attaining pupils but does not chart the smaller steps of progress made by lower attaining pupils. This is done by staff, but is more subjective and does not provide a good overview that can be analysed to support planning for progress, target setting and school improvement. A new system is currently being introduced to rectify this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, but their impact has been reduced this year by staffing difficulties and a temporary reduction in numbers of middle and senior managers. The main effects have been: a reduction in monitoring and support for the new and temporary teachers, following their initial induction, training and guidance which has led to a small amount of less effective practice; delay in the implementation of new systems to improve the school; and delay in the further distribution of leadership and management responsibilities. All of these have been recognised. Effective strategies have been implemented to reduce their impact and preserve the quality of provision for pupils as far as possible. The headteacher is a highly effective, calm, transformational leader and manager who is inspiring others and having a very positive effect on the school. He has the full support and involvement of the highly effective governing body. Together they provide very strong leadership and support the school and its development very effectively. Realistic, rigorous self-evaluation has underpinned outstanding plans for improvement. The vision for the school is very well communicated to staff, most of whom are keen to take on the developments, and some of whom are already leading change. Some improvements have already been successfully implemented, such as new curriculum planning and school self-evaluation systems. All staff are now involved in the school's self-evaluation, although not yet securely at a sufficiently penetrating level. New senior appointments have been made and a new, experienced senior leadership team and full complement of staff will be in place in September. The school is already functioning well and its capacity for improvement is good.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springhallow School, London, W13 0JG

Thank you very much for welcoming me into school last week. I would like to offer a special thank you to the three of you who came and talked to me so openly about the school, and your difficulties, experiences and hopes for the future. I came to Springhallow to see how it was working and how well you were all doing, and I was very pleased with what I found. I agree with the school staff and your parents that Springhallow is a good school, and I think that some aspects of its work are outstanding.

I found that the headteacher and managers are working very hard and successfully to improve the school, even though there have been rather a lot of staff absences this year. The staff work very well to help you stay safe and healthy, enjoy your work and prepare you for the next stage of your lives. With the school's help, your personal development is excellent. You are very considerate and I can see how well you understand your own and each other's difficulties. The school gives you an interesting range of things to do and the teaching is good. You make good progress as a result of this. The opportunities you have for spending time in mainstream schools, particularly those to help you follow subjects and courses that help your academic progress, are great. The exams and awards you get at the end of Year 11 are really impressive. Well done!

You may realise that the number of pupils with complex needs is increasing, particularly at the younger end of the school. I have asked the managers to revise the curriculum and provide extra training so that all staff are completely ready to meet their special needs when the time comes. I have also asked them to improve the assessment of your developing skills, so that the picture of your progress is clearer. That will help the staff plan for you to make even better progress, and will help the school to improve too.

I wish you all the very best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth

Lead Inspector