

Field Heath House School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 102464 |
| Local Authority | Hillingdon |
| Inspection number | 308016 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Melvyn Blackband |

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

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| Boarding provision | |
| Social care URN | |
| Social care inspector | Clare Davies HMI |

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Non-maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 7–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 71 |
| Sixth form | 44 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Marius Sykes |
| Headteacher | Sister Julie Rose |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 July 2005 |
| School address | Field Heath Road Uxbridge UB8 3NW |
| Telephone number | 01895 258507 |
| Fax number | 01895 256 497 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

This was a single integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Pield Heath is a non-maintained special school, which provides for students with a wide variety of complex learning needs, including those with moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with social, emotional and behavioural needs. There are also a minority of students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and with associated speech, language and communication difficulties. The school offers day and residential provision. This provision is used by 22 students, mostly in respite care. Four students, however, stay from Monday to Friday. Although a Catholic school, Pield Heath welcomes students from all faiths and religious backgrounds and accepts students from 17 different local authorities. Almost half of the students are from a White British heritage while the other students come from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The school has gained several national awards for its work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pield Heath House provides an outstanding education for its students. It has continued to improve on its performance since the previous inspection when it was judged a very good school. The students' attainment, because of their learning difficulties, remains far below that expected in mainstream schools, but all the students do very well in their studies and most make outstanding progress, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Students from Year 9 onwards are challenged successfully to gain a wide range of nationally accredited qualifications. 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 with autism or speech and language difficulties make huge gains in their confidence and willingness to attempt challenging learning activities.

The quality of teaching is excellent. The students enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Lessons are very well planned and this prepares the way for teachers and teaching assistants to give high-quality support to the students. One of the major strengths of the school is the exemplary way in which every aspect of the students' progress and development is painstakingly assessed and recorded. Teachers regularly and consistently review these assessments and this results in exceptionally sharply focused and challenging targets for each student. The curriculum is outstandingly effective because teachers tailor activities very successfully 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 exemplary and resulted last year, for example, in all the leavers going on to further education.

The school manages the students' behaviour exceptionally well. The behaviour of many students becomes outstanding as they move through the school and gain the understanding to control their own conduct. For most 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 helping students to develop their spiritual and moral understanding and this encourages them to respect and value themselves and others. Through the very effective provision for their personal, health and social education (PHSE), they learn to remain healthy and to keep themselves safe. The students value the school and this is evident in the excellent relationships they have with staff and their very good 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. One parent commented, 'My son is really stretched to reach his full potential. He loves school.'

The headteacher's outstanding and inspirational leadership have driven the continuing improvement. She has been well supported by a very competent leadership team. 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. There are very effective procedures, for instance, to monitor and measure students' progress, although the senior team are aware that there is scope further to refine its procedures to enable them to demonstrate the students' progress more easily. School leaders seek out and act 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.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students make excellent progress in their personal development because of well-planned procedures to help them gain the necessary self-confidence and independence to make their own choices and to prepare for adult life. Excellent teaching results in many of them continuing to make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy, in their life skills and in their grasp of work-related learning, particularly through the school's exemplary provision of 'Team- Enterprise' programmes. These programmes provide the students with excellent opportunities to work in teams, to engage with the community and to learn the basic principles of budgeting. The students are able to achieve their potential through a challenging range of accredited qualifications. Because of their excellent progress, all the students leave with the confidence and skills to go into further education. The provision is managed very well.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of the boarding provision at Pield Heath is outstanding. Dedicated staff ensure boarders feel safe and have fun while learning. All of the national minimum standards are met and a significant number have been exceeded.

Boarders have a comprehensive health care plan and there are clear procedures for the management and administration of medication. Staff are trained and supported by the school nurse, doctor and local health care services. The school works together with students and parents to ensure that the health care delivered is according to their wishes. The use of the multi-disciplinary team, speech and language, occupational therapist and physiotherapist to support students is effective and successful. The holistic approach ensures that health and medical needs of the boarders are met and their well-being is promoted by staff through the curriculum, physical exercise and a balanced diet. Boarders enjoy the food that caters for their medical and dietary needs. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award.

Boarders feel safe at school and this is promoted through a secure environment, good staffing levels and sound school policies. Behaviour support plans and individual risk assessments identify the needs of each boarder and staff are suitably trained and deployed. Boarders respond well to the guidance offered and thrive on the positive responses, praise and rewards. Boarders are encouraged to express their feelings and a variety of communication methods are used to suit their individual needs. Pictures, symbols and signs are evident throughout the school and residential house, and a child-friendly complaints procedure is available in picture form.

Very good safeguarding procedures exist throughout the school. There is contact with the local authority safeguarding team who provide staff training. Safer recruitment practices are adopted; this is reflected in the robust recruitment procedures. Health and safety issues are supported with sound policies and procedures that are tightly monitored by senior staff. Safety matters are reinforced with boarders through activities, fire drills, use of transport and the school code of conduct.

Students are able to access many after school and evening activities and these include the use of school facilities, visiting instructors and community resources such as a youth club and

shopping. These activities support boarders in developing good communication skills, confidence and life skills. Individual needs are considered paramount as education, care and medical attention are delivered to meet each student's identified needs. Communication is very good between school and the residential staff. Transition periods are managed very well with consistency in the approach to behaviour management. Residential staff contribute to education reviews and celebrate progress in the boarding provision alongside educational achievements.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Pield Heath is a Catholic foundation school and offers a service with a Christian ethos. The school promotes a culture of inclusion and celebrates a range of religious festivals to incorporate the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the students and staff. A reflection room provides designated space for staff and students to use to meet their individual spiritual needs. Each student is encouraged and supported to reach their potential and enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other children and young people. The range of methods of communication supports this inclusion. Appropriate adaptations have been made to accommodate students with limited mobility. For the students and staff there is a real sense of belonging to this school community where everyone is valued for who they are. Achievement is celebrated across the school and the mission statement promotes courtesy, concern and care.

Consultation with students occurs formally through a student council, surveys, class groups, residential groups, circle time and annual review meetings. The school also welcomes and encourages involvement from parents and has asked for their input on how the school can meet the Every Child Matters outcomes. Parent group meetings involve information-sharing, training and support.

Good boarding accommodation offers single rooms, promoting privacy. Regular boarders personalise their rooms with pictures and photographs. Bathroom facilities are suitable with appropriate aids and adaptations. The communal areas are welcoming and comfortable with soft furnishings. Students clearly enjoy and value their boarding experience where they feel secure and cared for by staff.

The principal provides strong leadership and she is well supported by senior staff. Regular meetings ensure communication flows well between all staff and the leadership team. The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff are strengths of the school and their passion for the students to enjoy and achieve are evident to visitors. Staff training is encouraged and made available in-house and externally when required.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the procedures for presenting the students' achievements so that teachers and senior staff are able to demonstrate how well they are doing more easily.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

All the students achieve well and many make outstanding progress. The students make excellent progress in meeting challenging targets in English and mathematics and in their personal development, and this has a significant impact on their achievement throughout the curriculum. The two students in Years 5 and 6 have made very good progress because of the high level of individual tuition that they receive. As students move through the school and they gradually overcome the emotional and behavioural or communication barriers to their learning, so the

rate of their progress accelerates. As a result, all the students in Years 9 to 14 are consistently successful in gaining a range of nationally accredited qualifications.

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 mutual respect and care. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are supportive to each other and pleased for their friends, for example, when they receive praise in assembly. Teachers encourage the students' spiritual and moral development in each learning activity and this has a substantial impact on their understanding. The students regularly celebrate their own and other cultures in themed days. The school's records show how quickly students respond to the school's clear rules. Their behaviour and their attitudes to learning improve and their rates of achievement then accelerate. They 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 and in the residential facility at the school. Older students make very good gains in acquiring life skills through the excellent careers provision and work experience. The students gradually develop a strong understanding of the cohesiveness of their community. For example, there are a wide range of links with other faith institutions, schools, business enterprises and local community groups and the school provides for students from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The students regularly celebrate this diversity within the strong school community. The attendance of most students is excellent 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.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching standards are exceptionally good throughout the school and this has a very substantial impact on the students' achievement. Teachers know their students very well and this enables them to plan interesting, well-paced activities that motivate the students to do their best. Teachers manage their classroom teams very effectively and the well-trained teaching assistants are thus able to provide high-quality support for the students. Teachers capture each small step in the students' progress and this leads to very well-focused targets for each student's further improvement. For instance, in an exceptional science lesson the Year 10 and Year 11 students explored, investigated, researched and hypothesised about the properties of magnets. By the end of the lesson all the students, who had widely differing levels of ability, had gained a clear understanding of what magnets do and why. Teachers place a very effective emphasis on the development of communication skills and this significantly enhances the students' involvement in learning activities. 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

Students enjoy a carefully constructed curriculum which is very well adapted to their needs and which is rigorously monitored for its impact on each student's achievement. Learning activities are always made interesting and directly linked to each student's learning and communication targets. 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. The school's excellent provision for the development of students' communication and other basic skills is extremely effective in promoting the students' confidence and their access to learning opportunities. There is a wide range of activities to take students out of the classroom, teaching them to behave appropriately in the community. This adds substantially to their social skills, their self-confidence and their interest in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The safeguarding of students is the greatest priority for school staff and all government requirements are rigorously complied with. Students are helped to make very good progress in their social and moral skills because of skilful behaviour management and the support they receive from all staff members. The students with additional communication difficulties are well supported. As a result, over time they make very good progress in their personal and academic skills. The students are proud of their successes and they like the way that staff discuss with them how well they are doing in their work and personal development and how they can improve their attainments. As a result, students have an excellent understanding of how to make their work better and this has a very positive impact on their achievement. Parents receive accurate and comprehensive progress reports and maintain a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. The students receive good advice and support as they are about to leave school and staff very successfully prepare students to move into adult social care or onto appropriate college courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management have enabled the school to build on the very good provision found at the previous inspection. Leaders have continued to be exceptionally successful in helping the students to develop a very good understanding and commitment to the cohesiveness of their immediate and more distant communities. One of the school's many strengths lies in the rigorous and analytical way managers monitor, evaluate and improve on every aspect of the students' academic and personal achievement. For instance, the assessment and tracking of students' progress is very effective. There are very effective procedures to measure and improve the performance of teachers and other staff. High levels of professional training are well planned, focus on the needs of the students and make a significant contribution to their outstanding achievement. Governors provide excellent support to the school; they work closely with individual staff and they rigorously monitor the school's strengths and areas for development.

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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 | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

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 | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of boarding provision | 1 | |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 | 1 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | 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**

10 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Pield Heath House School, Uxbridge, UB8 3NW

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 your classrooms and at lunchtime. Thank you and well done. I could see that you all enjoy school very much. I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that you go to a super school. I liked many things. Here are a few of them.

- You work hard and make excellent progress in your work and in your personal development.
- The many different people at the school look after you very well.
- You do many interesting activities, including those that help you become independent, make choices and learn all about different places and customs.
- All the adults work really hard to give you as much help as possible and they are very good at preparing interesting work for each of you.
- Your headteacher runs the school very well and everyone, including your parents, gives her strong support.

I think the school could improve even further if teachers were able to show your parents, even more clearly, just how well you are doing.

You can play your part too, just by working as hard as you have been doing!

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

Best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Melvyn Blackband

Lead Inspector