

Patcham House Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114679
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311663
Inspection date	5 June 2008
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
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Scott
Headteacher	Kim Bolton
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	7 Old London Road Patcham Brighton BN1 8XR
Telephone number	01273 551028
Fax number	01273 550465

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Patcham House School educates pupils with a range of learning difficulties and disorders including physical and neurological impairments, autistic spectrum disorders, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and language disorders, and medical and mental health conditions. Since the previous inspection, it has changed its age designation from primary/secondary to secondary only and the range of disabilities and disorders of pupils admitted is changing. A new headteacher has been in post for two years and the leadership team was newly restructured in September 2007. Before coming to Patcham House, pupils tend to have been out of schooling for a term or more. About 20% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Nearly all pupils are White British, none speaks English as an additional language, and one child is looked after by the local authority. Around 80% of pupils are boys. The school has an Investors in People Award, Health for Kids and a Sportsmark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Patcham House is a good school where pupils progress well and leave school with confidence to face future challenges. Many parents have positive views of what it provides, typically saying, 'My son has never been happier than he is now at school and has made more progress...than I believed possible' and 'I am impressed with...the strong emphasis on encouraging the children.' However, nearly a third of parents who responded had some negative views about the school particularly about pupils' behaviour. Parents are correct that the behaviour of some pupils is inappropriate some of the time. Although, overall, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and improving, the school has not always conveyed to parents clearly enough its policy and practice for managing the behaviour of pupils, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Also, there are some inconsistencies in the present application of the school's behaviour policy.

Strengths of the school include that it works exceedingly well with a very wide range of partners to enrich provision. These partners include health providers and other agencies, private companies, local colleges and the Connexions service. The curriculum is outstanding because so much is offered to meet the learning and developmental needs of pupils. This includes provision to help them settle into school when they first arrive, and support when the time comes to move on to college or paid work.

Pupils start school with standards that are below average for children of the same age. However, because they progress well and achieve well, they leave with qualifications that are similar to those that all pupils are expected to achieve. This is because the excellent curriculum motivates pupils and enriches their experience, and because the teaching is good. Challenging targets are set for pupils which they are aware of and which they achieve. Teachers and teaching assistants motivate pupils well and relationships between pupils and staff are very good. In some lessons, behaviour is only satisfactory because of inconsistencies in how pupils' behaviour is managed.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being is encouraged by the good provision for care, guidance and support. They feel very safe because there are procedures in place to ensure their concerns are listened to. Pupils are well aware of the benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise and act accordingly because the school promotes these very well. They enjoy school a good deal and attend regularly. They have a good understanding of what lies ahead of them in the world of work because the school uses its extensive links to provide opportunities for pupils to experience work and community life. Pupils also do their part for the community, for example, raising funds for good causes.

The school is well led and managed by a cohesive and supportive leadership team. The school has adapted well to the different types of special educational needs of pupils it now admits. Staff greatly appreciate the way their work is valued and how they have been personally supported when necessary. The school has a clear sense of direction and is aware of where it can improve further. It has worked hard to successfully adapt to new expectations, such as educating only older secondary age pupils and providing increasingly for pupils with different types of special educational needs. Governors are committed to the school and take their duties very seriously. A number are comparatively new and the school is aware that they have received too little training and support to enable them to deal with possible changes in the school's strategic role in the local authority and to increase their effectiveness in monitoring and

evaluating the school's work. The school has taken effective steps to improve since its previous inspection. It has coped well with various changes since then and has a good capacity and great determination to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Develop the school's behaviour policy and improve its consistent application, ensuring parents are very closely involved.
- Improve the contribution of governors by ensuring they receive training and support to better enable them to lead the school and fully evaluate and monitor its work

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils arrive at the school with below average standards for their age because of their special educational needs. They make good progress throughout their time at Patcham House and achieve well. They do well in their statutory assessments at the age of 14. Pupils leave with a range of appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs, and the school has suitable plans in place to further extend the range of qualifications available. Older pupils make particularly strong progress in developing skills for independence, which prepares them well for their future. By the time pupils leave the school, standards achieved are very often in line with students of the same age. There is no evidence of any significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. The progress of pupils with different types of special educational needs is also good. Pupils reach challenging targets for learning that are effectively monitored by the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel very safe and are increasingly confident, articulate and independent as a result of the exceptionally well-rounded curriculum, which meets their needs very well. They make their voice heard through the school council, target-setting meetings and reviews. Pupils' social development is strong because of the excellent opportunities to interact in a wide range of situations and learn from many different environments, including college and work experience. Pupils are beginning to make wise choices when using the Internet and in choosing food because of the very effective provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education. They greatly enjoy their education, as can be seen by their good attendance, involvement in clubs and engagement in the majority of lessons. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the community, especially in strongly embracing environmental issues. They represent the school on numerous occasions and raise money for charities. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and improving. Exclusions are decreasing and there have been none in the present academic year. However, parents and pupils are correct when they say that some behaviour is unacceptable and is impeding some learning. Pupils develop good workplace skills, preparing them well for the future and contributing very effectively to their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, but varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to build the pupils' trust and improve their motivation. Planning is clear without being burdensome. Staff know the pupils and their individual requirements very well. In the best lessons, pupils are well motivated to succeed and the work is pitched at the right levels to meet their different learning requirements. Interesting activities and good use of information and communication technology (ICT) also enhance lessons. For example, in a good English lesson, the pupils could not wait to get to their laptop computers to write a crime story based around an example that had been read to them. Where lessons are only satisfactory, pupils' behaviour is not well managed and there are inconsistencies in the way the behaviour policy is implemented. This leads to pupils' behaviour being only satisfactory in these lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is so successful in creatively meeting the range of pupils' needs. The school is very receptive to new developments such as the therapeutic Centre for Alternative Learning and Mentoring (CALM) initiatives. These are having a very positive influence on motivating pupils and preparing them extremely well for the future. Links with numerous agencies are outstanding in providing many additional learning opportunities as well as very successfully supporting individual needs. Much of the curriculum is based on providing practical experiences and taking into account the different ways in which pupils learn. Work experience, work-related learning and links with both colleges and mainstream schools contribute extremely positively to expanding pupils' horizons, raising expectations and improving their personal and social development. Wide-ranging sporting opportunities make a very valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. The developing use of 'making amends' through involving organisations concerned with restorative justice is another example of the innovative, outstanding links the school has built up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school knows each pupil very well and is very effective in meeting individual pupils' needs. The school works particularly well with a number of agencies to meet the needs of the changing school population, including those with mental health issues. Pupils' safety is taken very seriously and all staff have child protection training and are aware of the necessary procedures. Some staff are also trained in first aid. Health and safety is given suitable priority. Pupils express confidence in the systems that are in place to ensure they are listened to and their views and feelings are taken seriously. There are very good induction procedures for pupils entering the school and the transition from school when they leave is very well supported. Targets for personal and academic progress are set and monitored and involve pupils and their families. Increasingly, personal learning programmes are being successfully developed. Behaviour strategies are not always consistently applied and the school is reviewing and seeking to improve the effectiveness of its behaviour policy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school has worked hard to successfully adapt to the different age designation and the changing learning needs of newly referred pupils in recent years. The cohesive leadership team set a clear path for the school that helps drive forward improvements. Targets are challenging and are used effectively. The school monitors its performance well, analysing pupils' progress and evaluating teaching and taking appropriate action to improve outcomes. For example, the school has recognised the need to further extend the range of accreditation for older pupils and is taking the necessary action. The school's self-evaluation is accurate in most respects but was over generous in its assessment of personal development and well-being and care, guidance and support, which are good rather than outstanding. Equal opportunities are effectively promoted, contributing to the consistently good academic progress that different groups of pupils make. Resources are used well, including ICT, which is used very effectively in lessons.

The school works very hard to involve parents and has developed some successful initiatives, including parent-training sessions. However, the school involves parents too little in developing and refining approaches to behaviour management so they are not always aware of changes and improvements. Governors are committed to the success of the school and provide satisfactory support. Some are comparatively new and have received too little training and support to enable them to take a more strategic view of the school's future and to maximise their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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?	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	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	3
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

9 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Patcham House School, Brighton BN1 8XR

Thank you for your kind help when my colleague and I inspected your school recently. It was very good to speak with you and get your views on the school.

We found many good things. The curriculum and the activities the school provides are excellent and the school works extremely well with others to improve what it offers. You learn well, teaching is good, and the relationships between you and the staff are very positive. The school is well led and managed and you are well cared for.

There are some things that the school could do better. I have asked the staff to make sure that your behaviour is managed better and to involve parents more so they are more aware of what the school is doing to improve behaviour. In addition, I have asked that the governors undertake training to make sure they are better equipped to improve the school further.

I am sure you will do your best to make sure that your behaviour is even better than it is now.

I wish you well for the future.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell Lead inspector



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Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell
Lead inspector